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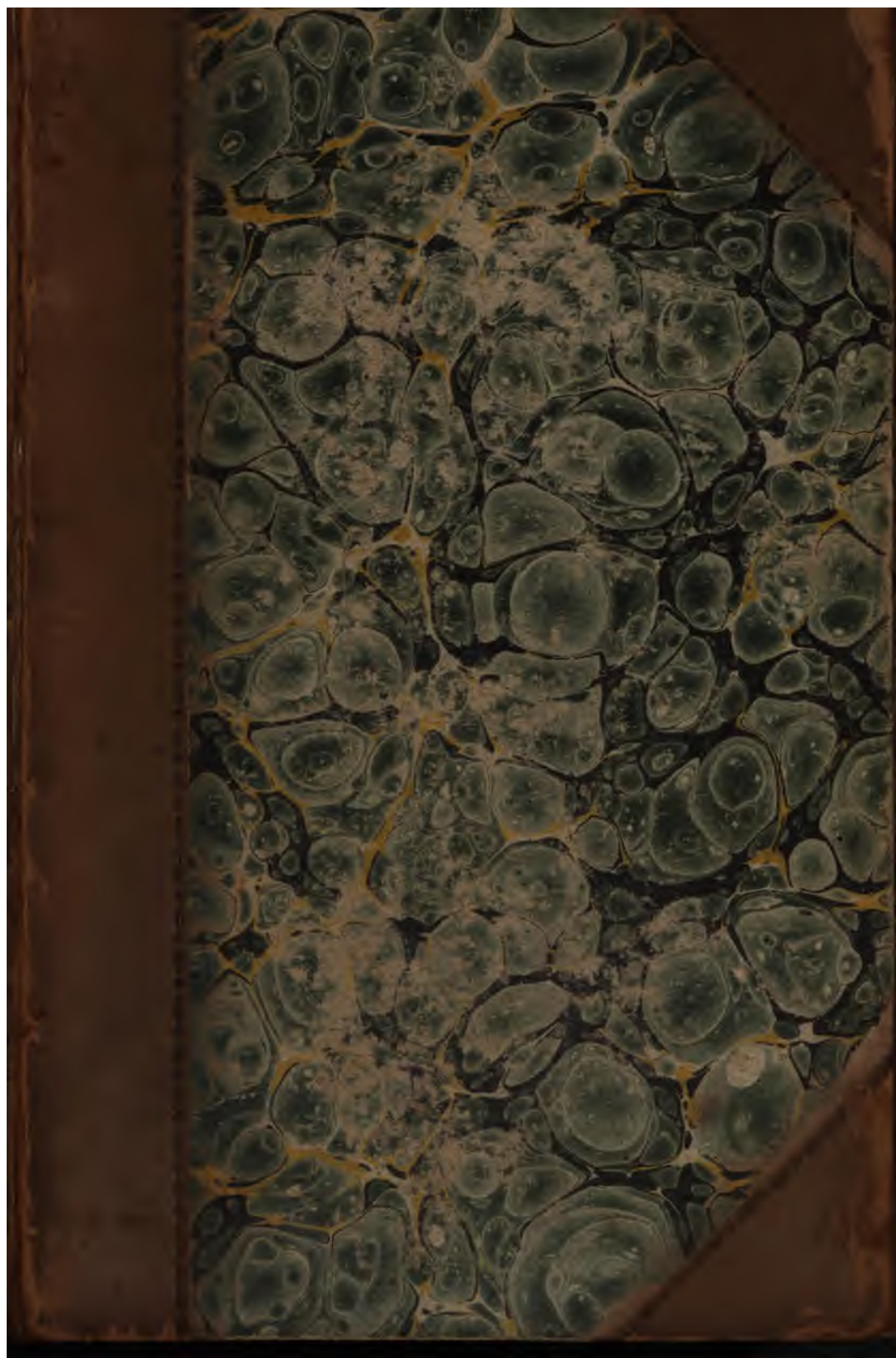
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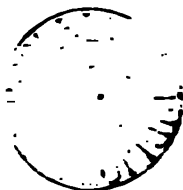
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THE
JUDGMENT OF A CHRISTIAN PEOPLE
UNDER
DIVINE VISITATIONS.

BY THE
REV. NEWTON SMART, M.A.
OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD.



“WHEN THY JUDGMENTS ARE IN THE EARTH, THE INHABITANTS OF THE
WORLD WILL LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

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TO
THE REVERED MEMORY
OF
ONE OF THE KINDEST AND BEST OF MOTHERS,
WHO
RECEIVED HER CHILDREN AS A GIFT THAT COMETH OF THE LORD,
AND PRAYED AND LABOURED,
WITH EARNEST AND FAITHFUL DILIGENCE,
TO BRING THEM UP IN THE NURTURE AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD,
THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED
WITH THE DEEPEST FEELINGS OF FILIAL LOVE, GRATITUDE,
AND VENERATION.

"THE MEMORY OF THE JUST IS BLESSED."

THE
DUTY OF A CHRISTIAN PEOPLE,
§c.

Isaiah x. 3.

“WHAT WILL YE DO IN THE DAY OF VISITATION AND IN THE
DESOLATION WHICH SHALL COME FROM FAR? TO WHOM WILL
YE FLEE FOR HELP?”

THE aspect of the times, upon a careful survey, presents, to the thoughtful mind, cause of anxiety for the safety and welfare of the empire; and, to the religious mind, ground for apprehension, lest the Almighty should be about to visit, for the sins of the nations, by “pouring upon them the vials of His wrath¹.” In the emphatic language of our Lord’s prediction of the latter days; there is, throughout Europe, “distress of nations with perplexity; men’s hearts failing them for fear; and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth².” In this country, to an alarming state of popular excitement, there has supervened a new cause of dread, so great, as almost to absorb, for the present, all subjects of merely temporal interest. A fearful and most fatal pestilence, which

¹ Rev. xvi. 1.

² Luke xxi. 25, 26.

had extended far and wide in Asia, has been gradually spreading throughout Europe, and steadily advancing towards our shores: there exists a difference of opinion as to whether or not it has reached them; but thus much is certain; an epidemic, similar in character, and hardly less malignant and fatal, has broken out in one of the seaports of the kingdom, and extended to some of the neighbouring towns and villages; thus appearing to establish its identity with the Continental disease.

Under circumstances so calculated to produce general apprehension, and so full of danger to the community at large, it becomes a matter of vital importance to enquire, What is the course a Christian people should adopt? To such an enquiry, the sincere Christian,—who is satisfied, that the safety of nations and of individuals is, at all times, in the protection of the Almighty; and who believes, that the sword, the famine, the earthquake, the tempest, and the pestilence, are but instruments in the hand of God to execute His sovereign and gracious will,—may justly reply in the words of a prophet of old, speaking in the name of the Most High: “**THEREFORE, ALSO, NOW SAITH THE LORD, TURN YE EVEN TO ME, WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH FASTING, AND WITH WEEPING, AND WITH MOURNING. AND REND YOUR HEART, AND NOT YOUR GARMENTS, AND TURN UNTO THE LORD YOUR GOD: FOR HE IS GRACIOUS AND MERCIFUL, SLOW TO ANGER, AND OF GREAT KINDNESS, AND RE-**

PENTETH HIM OF THE EVIL¹." And how is a whole nation to be called upon to humble themselves before God in the day of their visitation? Let the same Prophet return the answer; "BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION, SANCTIFY A FAST, CALL A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY, GATHER THE PEOPLE, SANCTIFY THE CONGREGATION, ASSEMBLE THE ELDERS, GATHER THE CHILDREN. LET THE PRIESTS, THE MINISTERS OF THE LORD, WEEP BETWEEN THE PORCH AND THE ALTAR, AND LET THEM SAY, SPARE THY PEOPLE, O LORD²."

As the Almighty, "with whom is no variable-ness, nor shadow of turning³," is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever⁴;" as "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope⁵:" let the people of this kingdom, strong in faith, raise, on an appointed day, their united voice in prayer; and in the language of sorrow, humiliation, and repentance, cry, O Lord, "we have sinned with our fathers, we have done amiss and dealt wickedly⁶;" but "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them who call upon Thee⁷!" Alas! because we see not the "outstretched arm" of Omnipotence, which governeth the nations; because we hear not the "mighty

¹ Joel ii. 12.

² Joel ii. 15—17.

³ James i. 7.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 8.

⁵ Rom. xv. 4.

⁶ Psalm cvi. 6.

⁷ Psalm lxxxvi. 5.

voice" which universal Nature obeys; we too often forget that "the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear¹:" we too often forget that it is "God that ruleth in Jacob, and unto the ends of the world²."

But is it sufficient to call upon a people, suffering under the apprehension or infliction of Divine judgments, to assemble in the courts of the Lord's house, to acknowledge the justice of their punishment, and to humble themselves before their God? Let the volume of inspiration again reply, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord³?"—"WASH YE, MAKE YOU CLEAN, PUT AWAY THE EVIL OF YOUR DOINGS BEFORE MINE EYES; CEASE TO DO EVIL, LEARN TO DO WELL, SEEK JUDGMENT, RELIEVE THE OPPRESSED, JUDGE THE FATHERLESS, PLEAD FOR THE WIDOW⁴."—"BEHOLD, TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE, AND TO HEARKEN THAN THE FAT OF RAMS⁵."

Much has been effected when a nation has been brought to prostrate itself before God, and, through a deep sense of its guilt, weakness, and misery, to flee unto Him, who alone is mighty to save; but incalculably more has been accomplished, when to the prayer for mercy has been added one for grace; and it has been truly, not less the language of the heart than of the lips, "Sanctify to us this thy

¹ Isa. lix. 1.

² Psalm lix. 13.

³ Isa. i. 11.

⁴ Isa. i. 16, 17.

⁵ 1 Sam. xv. 22.

fatherly correction, that the sense of our weakness may add strength to our faith, and seriousness to our repentance¹." May God, of His great mercy, vouchsafe to the people of this land, "to know the time of their visitation²;" to humble themselves before Him, who "in faithfulness has caused them to be troubled³;" to "seek the Lord while He may be found, and to call upon Him while He is near⁴;" and to "repent and turn themselves from all their transgressions: so iniquity shall not be their ruin⁵." Oh that the practical infidelity, which exists to such a fearful extent in the present day, may not withhold from a suffering people the deliverance and blessing which God alone can bestow! A neglect and distrust, if not a denial of God's Providence, in the preservation and government of nations and individuals, is one of the most crying sins of the day. Because the natural eye does not perceive the visible workings of a Divine economy in the course of events, it practically ascribes all to human means, and relies on human aid. But, as if "the finger of God" was to be revealed as pointing in wrath to this great truth of natural and revealed religion—a Divine providence—one of the most remarkable and terrible features of this fatal pestilence, through which so many millions of

¹ Service for the Sick. ² Luke xix. 44. ³ Psalm cxix. 75.

⁴ Isa. lv. 6. ⁵ Jer. xviii. 30.

human beings have been swept away; is, that whilst human prudence has been completely baffled in its plans of prevention, human science has failed in its attempts at cure. What a salutary lesson does this teach, in a day when earthly is often elevated above heavenly wisdom in the estimation of men, and when the arm of flesh appears more confided in than the arm of Omnipotence, for the accomplishment of events!

May the great Disposer of events, who, in the dispensations of His Providence, is graciously pleased to educe real good from seeming evil, make this awful visitation productive of religious advantage to this and other nations. May earthly sovereigns learn that the Lord, by whom "kings reign, and princes decree justice¹," is their defence, and "the Holy One of Israel, their King²:" may the rulers of the people remember, that "except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain³."

For although God's providence governs all things in heaven and in earth, still the great Sovereign of the universe, "the King of kings, and Lord of lords," "waiteth to be gracious," nor suffers His truth to fail. He shuts not up His loving-kindness in displeasure, but listens to the prayers of the meanest of His servants; and in answer to them, He

¹ Prov. viii. 15.

² Psalm lxxxix. 19.

³ Psalm cxxvii. 2.

often suspends, and sometimes averts his just judgments. The guilty cities of the Plain would have been spared for the sake of ten righteous, if that number of the servants of the true God could have been found amongst the inhabitants¹. Nor is the prayer of humble and contrite guilt disregarded. The judgments impending over Nineveh were suspended, when that mighty capital, at the preaching of a prophet, acknowledged its sin, and humbled itself before the Lord².

Let, then, the prayer of repentance, faith, and submission, arise to the throne of Divine grace, from the united people of the land; and, soon as the merciful object of this visitation is answered, we may humbly trust the command, as of old, will be addressed to the destroying angel, "IT IS ENOUGH, NOW STAY THINE HAND³." For the Almighty has himself declared, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that nation, AGAINST WHOM I HAVE PRONOUNCED, TURN FROM THEIR EVIL, I WILL REPENT OF THE EVIL THAT I THOUGHT TO DO UNTO THEM⁴."

May, then, this nation receive grace, in this their day of trial, to "TURN FROM THEIR EVIL," before the Lord "allow His full displeasure to arise." May they learn and acknowledge, that their only hope

¹ Gen. xviii. 32.

² Jonah iii. 10.

³ 2 Sam. xxiv. 16.

⁴ Jer. xviii. 7, 8. Psalm xci. 6.

of safety is in the mercy and long-suffering of God, who alone can preserve them from “ the pestilence which walketh in darkness, and from the sickness which destroyeth in the noon-day.” May they “ offer faithfully,” and the Lord “ receive acceptably,” their prayer for deliverance: “ Have pity, O Lord, have pity upon Thy people, both here and abroad ; withdraw Thy heavy hand from those who are suffering under Thy judgments ; and remove from us that grievous calamity, against which, our only security is in Thy compassion ¹!” And may our gracious and long-suffering Lord be pleased to arrest in its course the pestilence, now confined to few places, and to permit it not to spread dismay and death through the towns and villages of the kingdom.

Thus far, the duty of a Christian people *collectively*, under Divine judgments, has been shewn ; it remains to consider their duty *individually* ; which involves the consideration of what man owes to his God, his country, his neighbour, and himself, under any general visitation of Divine Providence. The Christian’s duty towards God, when His judgments are abroad, is a recognition of, and submission to, His chastening hand : to his country, unwearied exertion for the removal of the evils which appear

¹ It is much to be desired that the prayers set forth by authority, or others of a similar character, should be generally used in family worship.

to have called down the Divine vengeance : to his neighbour, friendly assistance, religious exhortation, and spiritual consolation : and to himself, through Divine grace, humiliation, repentance, amendment, and daily preparation for death and judgment.

These several duties, being all dependent upon each other, and intimately blended in their operation, may, perhaps, be not unfitly considered, as embraced by the public and private obligations of Christians under afflictive dispensations ; which may be briefly stated to be—earnest prayer and incessant labour to effect a PERSONAL REFORMATION, and, as far as in them lies, a NATIONAL REFORMATION ; which are proposed to be considered, as follows, more at large.

Let individuals “humble themselves under the mighty hand of God¹ ;” let them acknowledge the extent of their sinfulness, and the justice of their punishment ; let them confide in God’s mercy, and commit themselves to His safe keeping ; let them seek for grace to reform, in their lives and conversation, whatever is at variance with the Gospel ; from which, and not from the maxims of men, let them learn what is required of Christians.

Let them publicly bear testimony at once to the justice and mercy of God’s judgments, and strive earnestly to rouse the nation to a sense of its guiltiness, which has exposed it to the Divine dis-

¹ 1 Pet. v. 6.

pleasure ; let them, in dependence on the blessing of Heaven, labour to eradicate all infidel and heretical opinions ; to advance a reformation of public morals ; and to promote a general diffusion of true religion, sound learning, and useful knowledge.

Too justly does the language of Isaiah, addressed to the rebellious and guilty house of Judah, apply to our own times : “ Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters : they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone backward¹.” May He, “ who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men,” and convert them from the evil of their ways, “ pour upon all flesh the spirit of grace and supplication² ;” that individual may extend, until it become national repentance, and the whole nation worship before Him. Then will the scourge of His wrath prove the harbinger of His mercy, and we shall become a chosen people, a holy nation unto the Lord. Then may our gracious and long-suffering God allow us, without presumption, to draw comfort from those words of favour and forgiveness, spoken to His people when humbled and contrite : “ Remember these, O Jacob and Israel ; for thou art my servant ; I have formed thee, thou art my servant : O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me : I have blotted out as a thick cloud

¹ Isa. i. 4.

² Zech. xii. 10.

thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins : return unto me, for I have redeemed thee¹.”

I. The Christian's duty of personal reformation under Divine judgments.

It is from the volume of inspiration—whence he derives all the light which he enjoys, as to the providence, beneficence, and love of God ; whence he draws all the knowledge he possesses as to the nature of his own being, the object of his present existence, and the place of his final destination ;—man must learn his duty under the Divine dispensations. The Holy Scriptures are to the true Christian “ a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his paths².” When pursuing his heavenward journey through this vale of tears, the prospect often appears uninviting and gloomy, the sky dark and troubled, and the way, always narrow, becomes sometimes a thorny and tangled path. Dangers also, more or less near and alarming, keep the pilgrim often under apprehension, and always on his guard. Still, he pursues a straight-forward course, from which he deviates little—for he possesses a guide more unerring than the compass of the mariner, and that guide is the infallible Word of God. When darkness obscures, difficulties perplex, and dangers environ his road, in his unfailing “ lamp” he finds light, guidance, and safety.

¹ Isa. xliv. 21, 22.

² Psalm cxix. 73.

At this moment, a dark cloud hangs over this country :—nay, more, the storm of Divine displeasure has already commenced. Lest, therefore, it should burst upon us in its full “fury,” let all betake themselves to that blessed light, which, amid the thickest darkness and most appalling storm, can “guide our feet into the way of peace¹.” Let the enquiry be made as to the course to be adopted in the words of a Prophet: “*What will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? To whom will ye flee for help²?*” Let the same Prophet reply: “TRUST YE IN THE LORD FOR EVER, FOR IN THE LORD JEHOVAH IS EVER-LASTING STRENGTH³.”

Trust in God is the necessary fruit of faith, which is the only basis on which religion can rest: “he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him⁴ :” thus, except with one philosophical school of antiquity, a belief in the being of a God has, even amongst the Heathen, always been accompanied by a trust in His Providence. In the Christian scheme, this trust is a fixed, governing principle. “To take notice of the hand of God in every thing that befalls us,” says the learned and excellent Sherlock, “to attribute all the evils we

¹ Luke i. 79.

² Isaiah x. 3.

³ Isaiah xxvi. 4.

⁴ Heb. xi. 6.

suffer, and all the good things, to His sovereign will and appointment: this is the foundation of all the other duties which we owe to Providence, and the general neglect of this makes us defective in all the rest¹."

This passage supplies a clear view of Christian duty under afflictive dispensations. As faith recognises an Almighty Father's will in the appointment, and His hand in the direction of events, the believer refers equally national and individual prosperity and adversity, mercies and visitations, to Him, "whose power ruleth over all." And as he refers all events to the will and appointment of the great Governor of the Universe, he endeavours to receive whatever befalls him, as coming from His hand, with patient submission and humble thankfulness: for he knows how immeasurably his punishment falls short of his deserts; and he is assured, that "*God chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness*"²." At the same time, therefore, that he relies with firm dependence on the tender mercies, the blessed guidance, and sure protection of his Heavenly Father; he seeks for grace to improve to the spiritual advancement of himself and others, the divine chastisements,—“chastisements which originate in love, and are tempered with mercy”³:"

¹ Sherlock on Providence.

² Heb. xii. 10.

³ Bowdler's Remains.

*“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth”*¹. He enters, therefore, anew upon a careful review of his past life, and again summons before the bar of conscience, “the sins of his youth, and the offences of his riper age;” he recalls to mind the warnings he has had, the privileges he has enjoyed, and the mercies he has received; and he institutes a rigid scrutiny into his present life, which he tries by the unerring test of God’s holy word. And if he be sincere and honest, and not a dissembler with God, and a deceiver of himself, the language will spontaneously burst from his lips; “It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn Thy statutes”². “Oh, Lord, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in the day of affliction”³;—“Turn Thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and in misery. The sorrows of my heart are enlarged; oh, bring Thou me out of my troubles; look upon my adversity and misery, and forgive me all my sin”⁴.

Not that probably his life has been stained with deeper or more numerous offences than the generality of men: it may be that he has been “brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” and has never departed from serving his God; it may be

¹ Heb. xii. 6.

² Psalm cxix. 71.

³ Jer. xvi. 19.

⁴ Psalm xcv.

that he has long ranked amongst those who strive to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, amongst whom they shine as lights in the world¹." But still there lives not the man who has not much to repent of, and to humble himself for, before the Lord. And when the sorrows of life, the judgments of God, or the approach of death, loosen the hold of earthly ties upon the affections, and the attention becomes intently fixed on that invisible world of spirits, whither all are hastening: then, even he, who has long sought to serve his God with devout reverence and holy obedience, feels with stronger force, and sees with clearer view, the fearful extent of his omissions of duty and commissions of sin. When he considers that one moment may suffice to usher him into the presence of that Great Being, of infinite purity, in whose sight the heavens are not clean; when he remembers the condemnation passed on all sin by a righteous law;—conscious guilt compels him to bow before the Lord with the deep self-abasement of him who "smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner²;" and conscious weakness makes him call to the Saviour, with the imploring voice of him who cried, "Lord, save me³."

¹ Phil. ii. 15.

² Luke xviii. 13.

³ Matt. xiv. 30.

For when the conscience is fully enlightened, and the heart sanctified by Divine grace, a clear perception of the holiness of God's law, and a deep sense of personal unworthiness, are produced in the believer, which at once humble him to the dust, and lead him to throw himself entirely on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Then it is that he labours to devote himself more entirely to his Master's service, "and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things¹:" then it is he "sets his affections on things above²:" "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works³." And then it is that he takes for his song in the house of his pilgrimage, "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be afflicted⁴." "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the

¹ Titus ii. 10.

² Col. iii. 2.

³ Titus ii. 13.

⁴ Psalm cxix. 75.

things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal ¹."

Such is the conduct of the true believer under the chastening hand of the Lord; such the improvement which, through the Divine blessing, he is enabled to make of those afflictive dispensations, which are sent in mercy to remind him, that he is only a "stranger and pilgrim upon earth," and must "desire a better country, that is an heavenly ²." And when God's judgments are upon the land, when He has smitten the people with pestilence, the servant of the Lord rests with firm faith on the protection of Him, who has promised, as "thy days, so shall thy strength be ³." He knows that whatever happens to him is by the appointment of God, without whom even "a sparrow shall not fall on the ground ⁴;" he has further, the blessed assurance, that "all things work together for good, to them who love God ⁵;" therefore he has all "the joy and peace in believing" of those, whose minds being "stayed on God ⁶," abound in hope through "the power of the Holy Ghost ⁷." Not that he supposes he will possess a necessary exemption from the power of the pestilence; this would be to presume on God's protection: not that trusting to Divine

¹ 2 Cor. iv.

² Deut. xxxiii. 25.

³ Rom. viii. 28.

⁴ Heb. ii. 16.

⁵ Matt. x. 29.

⁶ Isaiah xxvi. 3.

⁷ Rom. xv. 13.

Providence he neglects all human precautions, and unnecessarily exposes himself to danger ; this would be, in the strong language of Scripture, to tempt God : not that he relies on human precautions as supplying any ground of security ; this would be to distrust God. But believing that the pestilence can have no power over him, except by the Divine appointment ; and being assured, that, if such be the Divine will, it will prove for his final and eternal welfare ; he uses, with entire dependence on the Divine blessing, the precautions which prudence dictates ; and commending himself to the safe keeping of God, he faithfully and diligently discharges the duties of his station and office, whether of pastor, magistrate, citizen, physician, or servant, or, as they may be included in one word, of Christian. Not that the believer, whilst he “ wears this veil of flesh,” is elevated so far above human infirmity, that, through the power of faith, he knows neither weakness nor fear in the hour of danger, and in the discharge of duty. St. Paul—in allusion to the marvellous change wrought in the soul, “ by the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,”—says, “ but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; we are perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed ; al-

ways bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our flesh¹." Still, they who have learnt, through grace, to confide, with the simplicity of a child, on the power, care, and love of their heavenly Father, will, amid difficulties and dangers, "prove more than conquerors, through Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us;" and will repose, with firm faith, pious hope, and holy confidence, on His protection, IN WHOSE HANDS ARE THE ISSUES OF LIFE AND DEATH; and who has said, by the mouth of his prophets, "THOU SHALT NOT BE AFRAID FOR ANY TERROR BY NIGHT, NOR FOR THE ARROW THAT FLIETH BY DAY; FOR THE PESTILENCE WHICH WALKETH IN DARKNESS, NOR FOR THE SICKNESS WHICH DESTROYETH IN THE NOON-DAY. A thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee²."

There are some sincere Christians, who, from natural timidity of disposition, or from constitutional debility, are peculiarly susceptible of fear; and distress themselves by considering such fear a proof that they do not possess the favour of God. Let them earnestly pray for that holy and firm faith, which disarms apprehension under great and imminent peril; but if they do not obtain it, let them not despond, but continue their prayers; it may be

¹ 2 Cor. iv.

² Psalm xci.

a blessing which Heaven has still in store for them. But if not, *having learnt submission to the Divine will*, let them draw comfort from words which should be so deeply engraved on the memory, as to be ever remembered, and speak peace, in their moments of doubt and alarm, to their troubled souls :

“ FEAR THOU NOT; FOR I AM WITH THEE : BE NOT DISMAYED, FOR I AM THY GOD : I WILL STRENGTHEN THEE; YEA, I WILL HELP THEE; YEA, I WILL UPHOLD THEE WITH THE RIGHT HAND OF MY RIGHTEOUSNESS ¹.”—

“ The truth is, the greater our fears and sorrows and aversions are, the greater is our submission to God : it may be thought a great weakness of nature to be so afraid of our sufferings ; but it argues the greater strength of faith, and is a more glorious victory over self, to make our very fears and aversions submit to the Divine will. Submission to God does not consist in courage and fortitude of mind to bear sufferings, which many have, without any sense of God, and which the profoundest reverence for God will not always teach us ; but he submits, who receives the bitter cup and drinks it, though with a trembling heart and hand ². ”

Thus much having been stated, that the timid mind or the sickly frame ; the tender plant of grace or “ the bruised reed ; ” may not sink under a weight of obligation, the fulfilment of which is

¹ Isa. xli. 10.

² Sherlock on Providence.

above their present strength ; and may not despair, because they fear they can never attain to that measure of faith, “ which, whilst it kisses with filial reverence the rod of correction,” can, in the strong language of St. Paul, “ *glory in tribulation* also ; knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope ; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us ¹.” Let it be remembered, at the same time, that though none should despond, because they possess not a strength of faith bestowed only on the most highly-advanced Christians ; still, all must earnestly seek grace to be enabled to “ go on unto perfection ² ;” by having implanted in their souls that “ perfect love, which casteth out fear ³.” And, as undoubting faith, unrepining submission, and unwearied supplication, are amongst the leading features of the true Christian character, they alone can enjoy the consolations of the Gospel of peace, who are “ rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer ⁴.”

It is a painful, an awful consideration, how many, in this Christian land, “ care for none of these things ⁵.” I speak not merely of the profane, the scoffer, the sceptic, and the infidel ; of those who

¹ Rom v. 3.

² Heb. vi. 1.

³ 1 John iv. 18.

⁴ Heb. xii. 12.

⁵ Acts xviii. 17.

“make a mock at sin,” and, disputing or disbelieving the truth of Christianity, “live without God in the world ;”—I speak also of the gay, the thoughtless, and the proud ; of the worldly, the avaricious, and the sensual ; of the envious, the malicious, and the censorious ; and, with shame be it said, of unworthy and false professors and teachers ; of the unsound in faith and morals ; of the lukewarm, the self-righteous, and the hypocritical ; in short, of all who, declaring a belief in the Christian faith, either mistake its doctrines, disregard its spirit, abuse its privileges, or live unmindful of its strict and holy obligations. Against all such the Gospel denounces condemnation and woe. How, then, are they prepared to meet the awful dispensation of Divine Providence, which has fallen upon the nation ? Let the prophet’s enquiry be addressed to them :—“What will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far ? to whom will ye flee for help ?” Will ye dare to say, “O Lord, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in the day of affliction ?” What ! can ye in sickness apply to God for relief, who in health were “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God ¹ ?” Can ye in affliction seek comfort of God, who in joy have by your actions denied God ? Can ye in adversity flee to God, who in prosperity had not God in all

¹ 2 Tim. iii 4.

your thoughts¹?" They who have never really sought, and submitted to the guidance of the Gospel, cannot hope to possess its support and consolations in the first hour of need. How dark, therefore, to such, is the season of sickness, of sorrow, and of adversity: they enjoy no light from above, no comfort from within, no consolation from without, which can brighten the gloomy mind, cheer the desponding heart, and soothe the alarmed conscience. Faithful and busy memory serves only to supply a painful retrospect of opportunities neglected, and warnings despised: and conscience, which had long slumbered in a deadly lethargy, often now inflicts her sharpest stings upon the wretched sufferer. And should they be arrested by the sudden stroke of a fatal malady, when living in forgetfulness of God, and intently occupied with the pursuit of pleasure, honour, or of gain; how terrible is the approach of death! How often, as this life is fading from the darkening eye, do the realities of the next burst upon the mind, with a distinctness and force never felt before! How often, as the soul is trembling on the fearful verge of eternity, is a vain wish entertained for the return of a brief portion of that time which has been spent in sin, folly, or the acquisition of what will not profit in a dying hour! But is the prayer for mercy, extorted

¹ Psalm x. 4.

by fear and suffering, never heard ; is the tardy repentance never accepted ? On the contrary, we believe the prayer of humble and contrite guilt to be never rejected : but, be it remembered, at the same time, that repentance is the gift of God, and that those who long trifle with their day of grace, and by silencing the admonitions of conscience, resist the Spirit, may be visited with the fearful punishment of judicial blindness and final impenitence. “ Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded : but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity, and will mock when your fear cometh ; *when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me* : for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord ; they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof¹.”

From this fearful denunciation of Divine wrath upon obstinate and hardened disobedience, what an awful lesson may be learnt, under the present circumstances of this country. How descriptive are many of the terms employed of that fatal pestilence

¹ Proverbs i.

which has broken out in the land! in the suddenness of the seizure, it resembles "THE WHIRLWIND;" by its destructiveness, it causes "DESOLATION;" and from the intensity of the sufferings which it produces, arise "DISTRESS AND ANGUISH." God grant that the threatened vengeance be not equally verified;—"THEN SHALL THEY CALL UPON ME, BUT I WILL NOT ANSWER; THEY SHALL SEEK ME EARLY, BUT THEY SHALL NOT FIND ME." Oh! let not any individual risk incurring such a fearful doom by delaying his repentance! The Lord now calls every one with a voice that all must hear; He has "bared an arm," which all must see; let not any longer refuse, let not any longer disregard, lest they should fill up the measure of their iniquity, and be swept away by the blast of Divine displeasure! Let not any trust to that, at all times presumptuous, if not always fallacious, hope, a death-bed repentance. That man, whose existence hangs upon a thread, which a moment may suffice to snap, should defer his preparation for death and judgment, is such an act of madness, that nothing but a knowledge of its certainty could make a religious mind credit the fact. What! risk an eternity of joy or misery on the chances of a moment! for beyond the present moment, man possesses no security of the continuance of life. And the very presumption which leads him to calculate upon long years to come, may call forth that awful sentence,—“Thou fool,

this night thy soul shall be required of thee." But if the postponement of turning and calling upon God be, under ordinary circumstances, full of presumption and danger, what is it now in times of pestilence? From the many instances of mortality which encompass us on every side, "there comes a voice, which solemn sounding bids the world prepare." The judgments of the Almighty,—to those who are living in forgetfulness of Him, and disobedience to His commands, but have not entirely thrown off His service,—speak the language addressed to Jonah, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God¹." But to those who refuse to turn, who "harden their necks against the reproof, and will have none of the counsel of God;" they resemble the characters of flame upon the walls of the palace of Belshazzar, which announced the terrible decree,—"**THOU ART WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES, AND ART FOUND WANTING².**"

The Christian writer, judging from the experience of the past, cannot close his eyes to the sad truth, that there are some whom mercy softens not, whom threatening warns not, whom danger alarms not. Who amidst manifestations of Divine wrath, display hardened unconcern or desperate wickedness. What a striking proof have we here of the effects of sin in hardening the heart, and

¹ Jonah i. 6.

² Daniel v. 27.

deadening the conscience. But let not any imagine that such men will view the approach of the fatal malady without alarm. The bodily anguish will probably supply no parallel to the mental terror, when they find themselves clutched, as it were, in the grasp of the mortal disease which is destroying them. And in the ordinarily brief interval between seizure and that death, which so often ensues, if conscience resume her power, how terrible must be the remorse, how unutterable the anguish of the affrighted soul, which sees death, death eternal in view, and yet cannot pray : or if the cry for pardon and help to their long-forgotten God, burst from the quivering lip, it is the bitter cry of almost despairing terror. Sad as are many of the scenes which human life presents in its passage from the cradle to the tomb ; and harrowing to the feelings of beholders as is the sight of corporeal anguish ; how immeasurably do other scenes of human suffering fall short of the union of bodily and mental agony, often witnessed on the death-bed of terrified guilt ! but still, to the religious mind, there are two death-beds still more fearful, as being more hopeless ; and they are, when desperate wickedness, at its last hour, evinces hardened indifference or blasphemous despair ; when no prayer is offered, or when curses are mingled with the prayer.

May the fear of such death-beds act, through the grace of God, as a salutary warning to those

who are living in sin, and neglecting to improve the call to repentance sent in mercy: and let their thoughts extend beyond the present life, and draw further instruction from the awful truth—that whilst death terminates to impenitent guilt its present sufferings, it commences others far more terrible.

Were it permitted to a living man to pass the portals of the dark prison-house of disembodied spirits, and witness the punishments of the condemned,—the unceasing gnawing of the undying worm, the unremitting burning of the unquenched fire;—what words could express the joy and thankfulness of that man, on returning to the land of the living and the place of hope! Would he lose a moment in fleeing to the cross of Christ, for deliverance from sin, or refuge from the wrath to come? Would he still defer seeking for “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ¹?” The terrible realities he had witnessed of that state of untried being on which the soul enters at death, would doubtless haunt his waking and his sleeping hours, and he would find no rest till God, by his Spirit, had spoken peace to his affrighted soul. And then, long as life lasted, it would be his daily subject of grateful thanksgiving to his gracious long-suffering Lord, that he had borne

¹ Acts xx. 21.

with his iniquities, and had not cut him off in the midst of his sins : but through the Divine mercy he was allowed on earth "to praise the Lord with joyful lips," instead of "in hell, lifting up his eyes, being in torments ¹."

But such a visit to the place of condemned spirits is not necessary to learn all that in our present state of being it concerns us to know. The volume of inspiration has revealed the awful truth, that an eternity of torments awaits the condemned in a future world.

Will not, then, this suffice to rouse thoughtless and sinful men to a sense of danger ? The judgments of the Almighty now upon the land ; death approaching many under a fearful form ; the presumption and sinfulness of trusting to a late repentance ; the danger of the infliction of judicial blindness ; the horrors of a guilty death-bed ; the torments of the damned, have all been urged as so many calls to repentance, and may God accompany them with his grace, that they may not be urged in vain ; but all of these equal not the awfulness and terribleness of AN ETERNITY OF TORMENT. There is something overpowering in the idea of unmitigated unmitigable woe ; it is so terrific, that it astounds, it is so vast, that it overwhelms the mind : for the finite faculties of man cannot grasp eternity : they

¹ Luke xvi. 23.

are lost in the maze of millions of years rolling on in endless succession. But if there be any who have tost, for one night, on a bed of suffering ; any who have experienced, for one hour, the racking torture of intolerable pain ; let them ask themselves how they would endure, in the immensity of endless time, “ the worm which dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched.”

May this awful consideration have its due weight upon every reader ; may those who have not yet been “ turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,” obtain grace to seek pardon and peace through the Saviour who brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel ; that, through Him they may escape “ the fire prepared for the devil and his angels ¹.”

“ Knowing, therefore, the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men ²,” says St. Paul : who afterwards adds, “ Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled unto God ³.” It is thus the Christian minister declares the denunciations of Divine vengeance, and the certainty and eternity of Divine punishments, that he may prepare the way for a joyful acceptance of the offers of Divine mercy. This two-fold duty of the ministerial office, is beautifully described by Cowper :

¹ Matt. xxv. 41.

² 2 Cor. v. 11.

³ Ibid. v. 20.

“ There stands the messenger of truth, there stands
 The legate of the skies ! His theme divine,
 His office sacred, his credentials clear.
 By him the violated Law speaks out
 Its thunders : and by him, in strains as sweet
 As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace ¹.”

The dispensations of the Almighty are at once the inflictions of his displeasure, the warnings of his love, and the invitations of his mercy : to every sinner they address the enquiry, “ Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God ² ? ” May the Almighty give his blessing upon the afflictive visitation He has sent upon this land, that sinners may be roused to a sense of their danger, and brought to embrace thankfully the offers of pardon and salvation, made through Christ Jesus our Lord !

The Holy Scriptures present at once the most earnest calls to repentance and the most gracious offers of forgiveness. “ As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live : turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will

¹ The Task.

² Rom. ii. 4, 5.

ye die, O house of Israel¹?" "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal, and are not your ways unequal? saith the Lord. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore, turn yourselves, and live ye²." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool³."

Such are some of the invitations of the Holy Scriptures to turning and calling upon God. Let us, then, suppose the case of one who is alarmed by the Divine threatenings; who, conscious of his guilt, sees as it were the gulf of perdition yawning beneath his feet; but is deterred, by a sense of the heinousness of his sins, from seeking the pardon which he despairs of obtaining. How is he to be addressed? The love and mercy of God, as shewn towards a guilty and perishing world, in the mysterious, but most gracious, plan of redemption,

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

² Ezek. xviii. 29.

³ Isa. i. 18.

through the Saviour, must be pointed out, and largely dwelt upon. Under the severer dispensation of the Law, amid the awful splendours of its promulgation, the Lord was proclaimed to be "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty¹." Under the Gospel dispensation, it is emphatically said, "GOD IS LOVE²:" that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life³." Let not, therefore, the heinousness of past sins, and the sense of present unworthiness, deter any from coming to the Saviour: for "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved⁴." And that gracious Saviour has authoritatively declared, what is the sole condition of acceptance, through His infinite merits: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life⁵:" and has tenderly invited all to flee unto Him who labour under the yoke of sin, or the burden of sorrow; "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest: take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in

¹ Exod. xxxiv. 6.² 1 John iv. 8.³ John iii. 16.⁴ John iii. 17.⁵ John vi. 47.

heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls : for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light¹." Before the nativity of our blessed Lord, the command was conveyed by an angel, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins²." Agreeably to which, He Himself says, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance³." And St. Paul prefaces his delivery of the great truth he was commissioned to teach, in a manner befitting its importance : "This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners⁴." If the Gospel did not contain a free pardon for sin, little would it be in accordance either with its name, *good news*, or with the proclamation of the heavenly host, which heralded the birth of the Messiah : "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be *to all people*, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord⁵." To every penitent the promise is addressed—"Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out⁶." The Divine mercy towards repentant sinners knows no restrictions ; the cleansing power of the Saviour's blood, no limitations.

If there be any self-convicted and self-condemned sinner, still hesitating to throw himself

¹ Matt. xi. 28.

² Matt. i. 21.

³ Matt. ix. 13.

⁴ 1 Tim. i. 15.

⁵ Luke ii. 10.

⁶ John vi. 37.

upon the mercy of God in Christ, let him hear the Psalmist, who has represented under the most striking and affecting images, the love of God towards man: "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy; long-suffering and of great goodness. He will not always be chiding, neither keepeth He his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our wickednesses. For look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth, so great is His mercy also toward them that fear Him. Look how wide also the east is from the west, so far hath He set our sins from Him. *Yea, like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them who fear Him.* For He knoweth whereof we are made, He remembereth that we are but dust¹." Let him hear St. John, who has stated the full extent of Christ's atoning and mediatorial power: "If *any man sin*, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world²." Let him hear St. Paul, who has supplied a sure ground of unfailing trust in God: "*He that spared not His own Son*, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things³?" Should any one still hesitate

¹ Psalm ciii. 8.

² 1 John ii. 1.

³ Rom. viii. 32.

to come unto Christ as their Saviour, let him hear His merciful expostulation, "*Ye will not come to me that ye might have life*¹." Let him listen to His gracious enquiry, "*Wilt thou be made whole ?*" And if he still cannot persuade himself, that there is mercy in store for such a sinner as himself, let him at last draw comfort from the assurance, that "*the Son of Man is come to save that which is lost*²," and seeks after perishing sinners, as the faithful shepherd after the sheep which have wandered from the fold. Nor is this all: not only does our gracious Lord *seek after guilty and lost sinners*, but "*likewise there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over ONE SINNER that repenteth*³." What a proof have we here of the value of the soul in the sight of God! His incarnate Son dying to redeem it from eternal misery; when restored to His Father's right hand, watching over it with constant care; and seeking, with tender gentleness, to bring back the wanderers from the fold of grace: and when the slave of sin breaks his fetters, and through grace given unto him, falls repentant and humbled at the foot of the cross, then joy is felt in the court of heaven, and the seraphic choir give praise, and honour, and glory, to "*Him who sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb*⁴;" because a poor sinner has been turned, by the marvellous

¹ John v. 40.

² Matt. xviii. 11.

³ Luke xv. 10.

⁴ Rev. v. 13.

grace of the Gospel, “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that he may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus¹.”

The gracious and unmerited invitations of Divine mercy are addressed to all sinners by “God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth².” Let not therefore any one say, my sins are too great to be forgiven; this is to limit the atoning efficacy of Christ’s blood, which is illimitable: let not any one say, I am not yet fit to come unto Christ; this is to mistake the nature of the Gospel, which is designed to remedy man’s natural unfitness: but let all betake themselves to Christ for pardon of past sins, through His blood; and for strength against future temptations, through His grace. Nor let it be thought that these observations apply only to gross sinners. One description of man’s natural condition, and only one, applies to the whole human race;—“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God:” and one means of restoration to the lost favour of God, and only one, is offered to the whole human race;—the “being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation,

¹ Acts xxvi. 18.

² 1 Tim. ii. 4.

through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God¹." Those who refuse to come unto Christ as sinners, stand self-excluded from all benefit of His atonement. To such the Saviour addresses the words,—“ Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and *knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of ME gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see*².” Man’s natural weakness and sinfulness is the fundamental truth on which the Christian plan of redemption is built; for if he had possessed inherent power to overcome his natural depravity, and keep the commandments of God, the sacrifice of Christ would not have been necessary for the atonement of his sins, and for his escape from eternal condemnation. Did we not know that pride, based upon a poor and defective system of morality, generally shows the most decided hostility to the humbling doctrines of the Gospel, it would hardly be believed that any would refuse to come to Christ as sinners. How much at variance are such self-righteous feelings with the

¹ Rom. iii. 24, 25.

² Rev. iii. 17, 18.

spirit of the confession of our Church, in which, under the appropriate and affecting figure of sheep wandered from the fold, we are accustomed to entreat the pity, protection, and guidance, of the great "Shepherd of our souls." There are two considerations, however, which may, with the Divine blessing, if duly weighed, bring such persons to the foot of the cross with deep self-abasement and acknowledgment of sin: one is, that in the Gospel the motive determines the value of an action; and the Christian's motive is, to do all to the glory of God: the other is, that man is accountable, not only for his actions, but for his omissions; not only for every idle word, but for every sinful wish; nay, more, for every impure thought indulged and cherished. Let those who think their failings few and venial, their merits great, and deserving of reward, apply to their lives these two great tests of Christian holiness—praying, at the same time, to "the Father of lights," for grace and knowledge: and if they be not brought to admit, that "in many things we offend all¹," if it be not the language of their hearts, "We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indig-

¹ James iii. 2.

nation against us ;”—they are ignorant of the spirit of the Gospel, and far from the kingdom of God. For, like the Jews of old, “ they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge : for they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*¹.” “ That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption ; that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord².”

To true believers, “ CHRIST IS ALL IN ALL³ :” on His atonement they rest for pardon before God ; on His grace they rely for strength ; and to His merits they trust for salvation. Their truly Christian hope is built upon a lively faith ; they believe “ that man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation⁴.” That “ the condition of man, after the fall of Adam, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by

¹ Rom. x. 2, 3.

² 1 Cor. i. 29.

³ Col. iii. 11.

⁴ Article IX.

his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will¹.” “That we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works and deservings: wherefore that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort².” And “albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgments; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit³.”

Such are the four Articles of the Church of England which declare man’s natural corruption; his just exposure to Divine condemnation; his means of restoration to God’s favour; the meritorious cause of his salvation; and the inseparable union of faith and good works. From which may be drawn these two fundamental principles of the Christian faith—salvation, alone through the all-sufficient

¹ Article X.

² Article XI.

³ Article XII.

merits of Christ ; and sanctification, alone through the renewing power of the Holy Ghost. Man is, in every respect, a dependent being : the same Almighty Power which formed his body from the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; can alone enlighten, renew, and sanctify his soul. Thus faith—which is the rock on which the Church of Christ is built, and without which we shall never believe the promises, accept the offers, or attain the salvation of the Gospel—is the gift of God, and wrought in our souls by the Holy Spirit. United with faith is true repentance, which is no less the work of grace ; for unless God enlighten the understanding, there will be no just sense of sin ; unless He soften the heart, there will be no contrition : and from a true repentance there always springs holy obedience, which is also produced by the Spirit : for the same blessed Power which enlightens the darkness of the understanding and softens the hardness of the heart, also rectifies the perversion of the will, and sanctifies the corruption of the affections, that the believer may know, choose, obey, and love, the way of godliness. And thus we arrive at that blessed change in the life of a penitent, when he becomes “ a new creature in Christ Jesus,” when “ old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new ;” when he has “ put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

The renewal and sanctification of the soul is the only sure ground on which the Christian can build his unfailing hope of salvation. Not that any may presume to limit the extent of the Divine mercy, or state a definite time for the operations of the Holy Spirit. The first is as boundless as it is unsearchable; the second may be as instantaneous as it is incomprehensible. Thus much we know with certainty, that when that most encouraging call to repentance was addressed to the Jewish people,—“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon;”—there was added, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts¹.” Still, all who have time and opportunity must prove the sincerity of their repentance, and the soundness of their faith by the holiness of their practice. Nor can it be too earnestly insisted upon, that it is only by the gift of a new and holier nature, man can rise above the pleasures of sense and things of time, and set his affections on the joys of immortality; and that the new and holier nature is implanted, when the gracious promise is fulfilled—“I will give them one

¹ Isa. lv. 7, 8.

heart, and *I will put a new spirit within you ; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh*, and will give them an heart of flesh : that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them : and they shall be my people, and I will be their God ¹.” It is to the use of palliatives much of the insincere repentance and imperfect reformation of men is to be ascribed. When their fears are alarmed, they set about correcting some flagrant sins, and it may be, become outwardly moral, and even attentive to religious duties ; but the renewal of the heart, through grace, and the dedication of its affections to God, are never thought of ; and yet they are satisfied with this condition. Such persons are only to be roused by preaching conversion or condemnation. They must be taught to pray, with repentant David, “ *Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence ; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. O give me the comfort of thy help again, and stablish me with thy free Spirit* ².”

The great work of the renewal and sanctification of the soul is ordinarily accomplished by a progressive growth in grace ; during which, the believer is gradually enabled to obtain the mastery over the corrupt affections of his nature, to acquire the graces and perform the duties of the Christian character, and “ to set his affections on things

¹ Ezek. xi. 19.

² Psalm li.

above," ever "pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ¹," and endeavouring to "come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ²." In the life of some of those who have been "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ³," and have never departed from serving their God, there may be no clearly defined transitions, no strongly-marked shades, in the harmoniously-blended colours, in which has been traced the even tenor of their way. But such cases are probably rare—for those who attain to a very high degree of spiritual-mindedness, can generally fix upon some definite period in their religious life, when they obtained clearer views of their personal unworthiness, and of the holiness of God's law; of the insufficiency of the things of earth to minister to the wants of an immortal soul; and of the inestimable value of the "treasure in heaven," than they ever possessed before; and when they learnt to rely on their Lord more confidently, to love Him more devotedly, to advance His cause more zealously, and to obey Him more steadily and implicitly. In the case of those, who have either deserted the God of their youth for a "world lying in wickedness," but, like the prodigal, upon abandoning its vices and follies, have been received and pardoned by a merciful Father; or

¹ Phil. iii. 14.

² Ephes. iv. 13.

³ Ibid. vi. 4.

who have been brought up in ignorance of religion, but have been plucked like a brand from the burning, by one of those afflictive dispensations which God often sends in mercy to awaken sinners ; the time and circumstances of their conversion¹ will be clearly marked and ever remembered : “ it is too momentous an event,” observes Paley, in writing of such conversions, “ to be forgot : a man might as easily forget his escape from a shipwreck².”

The knowledge of the time, however, when conversion takes place, is principally of importance, as far as it goes to establish the fact, the certainty of which must always be determined by the effects produced ; for it is easy in this, as in every other particular of religious experience, to be deceived. But there can be no deception when the believer is at once conscious of a change in his heart, and exhibits a reformation in his life ; for then he may say, this I know, that whereas I was dead, now am I alive in the Lord : he possesses an internal witness to his being born of God ;—“ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God ;” “ He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the

¹ The term conversion is here employed to express that change of will, heart, and life, wrought by divine grace in those, who, when living in ignorance or neglect of God, are brought to believe, obey, and love the Gospel, the spirit of which they had never before truly known, the power of which they had never before really felt.

² Sermons, p. 125.

witness—in himself;” and His life affords external proof of His Sonship;—“Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not¹.” He rejoices, therefore, in the glorious privileges of the Gospel, through which “there is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit;” through which, “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God²;” and through which, “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus.”

Let, then, the reformed examine strictly into their lives, as to whether they exhibit decisive proofs of a genuine conversion; of conversion, not used in its limited sense, as implying a sudden or even violent change, but in the more extended sense, of a recovery from sin, and of a full development of the Christian character:—a conversion which, in its completion, is equivalent to the renewal of the soul in righteousness; the progress of which may be, in some, so gradual, as almost to be imperceptible, but must be, in all, so certain, as to be unquestionable. Let those, who, through the grace of God, have endeavoured to live ever mindful of their baptismal engagements, and duly sensible of the blessed privileges of the Christian

¹ 1 John v. 1. 10. 18.

² Rom. viii. 1. 14.

covenant, institute a no less rigid examination into their lives, as to how far they manifest a continued growth in grace ; an increasing in every good word and work ; a growing conformity to the example of Christ ; a visible ripening for heaven ; and a gradual restoration of the lost image of God in the soul. And what is to be said to those who have either never learnt, or have wilfully violated, their baptismal engagements ; and during a long course of sin, have neglected, disobeyed, and forgotten God, whose calls to repentance they still disregard ? The same language must be addressed to the habitual, as was applied to the externally reformed sinner ;—whose heart was still the seat of vain or impure desires, of base or malignant passions ;—CONVERSION OR CONDEMNATION. “ Of the persons in our congregations,” says Paley, “ to whom we not only may, but must, preach the doctrine of conversion, plainly and directly, are those, who with the name indeed of Christians, have hitherto passed their lives without any internal religion whatever ; who have not at all thought upon the subject ; who, a few easy and customary forms excepted (and which with them are mere forms), cannot truly say of themselves, that they have done one action, which they would not have done equally, if there had been no such thing as a God in the world ; or that they have ever sacrificed any passion, any present enjoyment,

or even any inclination of their minds to the restraints and prohibitions of religion ; with whom, indeed, religious motives have not weighed a feather in the scale against interest or pleasure. To these it is utterly necessary that we preach conversion ¹.” “ The next description of persons to whom we must preach conversion, properly so called, are those who allow themselves in the course and habit of some particular sin, with more or less regularity in other articles of behaviour ; there is some particular sin, which they practise constantly and habitually, and allow themselves in that practice. Other sins they strive against, but in this they allow themselves. Now no man can go on in this course consistently with the hope of salvation ; therefore, it must be broken off. The essential and precise difference between a child of God and another is, that the true child of God *allows himself* in no sin whatever ; cost what it may, he contends against, he combats all sin ; which he certainly cannot be said to do, who is still in the course and habit of some particular sin ; for as to that sin, he reserves it, he compromises it. Here then we must preach conversion ².” “ In these two cases, therefore, men must be converted and live, or remain unconverted and die ³.”

Let then all those who are living in ignorance of

¹ p. 123.

² p. 126.

³ p. 128.

the spirit, and consequently in neglect of the obligations of the Gospel, lay this to heart; and let them not imagine that it is only intended to alarm their fears. The scoffer, the profane, the sceptic, and the infidel, can hope for nothing through a Gospel which they ridicule, despise, or reject. But the gay, the thoughtless, and the proud—the worldly, the avaricious, and the sensual—the malicious, the censorious, and the envious—all profess to believe the Gospel; and the lukewarm, the self-righteous, and hypocritical, pretend to make it their rule of life. “To the law, and to the testimony,” to see whether these must all be converted or condemned. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity¹.” It appears, therefore, possible to exercise some of the highest functions of Christianity, and yet to be cast away. “Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified².” “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves³.” Hence, then,

¹ Matt. vii. 21.

² Rom. ii. 13.

³ James i. 22.

we learn the worthlessness of a mere profession of the Gospel. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him¹." Here we are taught the incompatibility of the love of the world with the love of God. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these;—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God²." This fearful catalogue of offences, which exclude from heaven, passes sentence of condemnation upon all who live in the indulgence of any known sin. From these, and many other passages of Scripture, as well as from its general tenor, we arrive at the conclusion, that the various classes of men which have been described, are all exposed to the righteous judgment of God, ready to be revealed at the last day. They bear the Christian name, it is true, but that is all they possess of a blessed dispensation, which was ushered in by the preaching of repentance:—"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, *repent ye and believe the Gospel*³;" and which has always imposed upon its converts personal holiness,

¹ 1 John ii. 15.

² Gal. v. 19—21.

³ Mark i. 15.

as a universal obligation, and inseparable from its promises and rewards; “ *Wherefore follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*¹.” “ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works².” As being destitute, therefore, of the essentials of the Christian faith, the powerful writer, who has already been quoted at such great length, says, “ these persons are really in as unconverted a state as any Jew or Gentile could be in our Saviour’s time. They are no more Christians, as to any actual benefit of Christianity to their souls, than the most hardened Jew, or the most profligate Gentile, was in the age of the Gospel. As to any difference in the two cases, the difference is all against them. These must be converted before they can be saved. The course of their thoughts must be changed: the very principles upon which they act must be changed. Considerations which never, or hardly ever, entered into their minds,

¹ Heb. xii. 14.

² Titus ii. 11.

must deeply and perpetually engage them. Views and motives, which did not influence them at all, either as checks from doing evil, or as inducements to do good, must become the views and motives which they regularly consult, and by which they are guided;—that is to say, there must be a revolution of principle: the visible conduct will follow the change, but there must be a revolution within.”

These observations are made by Paley, with reference to those persons “ who have hitherto passed their lives without any internal religion whatever ;’ with whom, in short, religion has not been the rule of life. Oh ! that the countless multitudes within this kingdom, to whom this description applies, and who are living regardless, if not ignorant, of the eternal condemnation impending over their unconverted souls, “ would be wise and consider their latter end.” Oh that they would be persuaded to learn from the word of God, what the holy name which they bear requires of them ; and consider what the vows made in baptism bind them to, if they wish to be partakers of the precious benefits purchased for his faithful servants by Christ, at the costly price of his blood. “ Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures,” is a reproof which applies to them all. For, unfortunately, the generality of men are content to receive from others all they know of religion : they do not enquire for themselves ; but willingly acquiesce in the most indulgent views of

human duty. And if they do sometimes read the Bible, yet they do not study it, and pray over it, with an anxious desire to be brought to a knowledge of the truth; with a firm determination to receive the truth, however unpleasant, however opposed to their present opinions; and with resolution, not suddenly taken, but after mature and anxious deliberation, and not formed in dependence upon themselves, but upon Divine grace, to build their faith and practice on its holy doctrines and precepts. To all such, however, we would say, "This do, and ye shall live:" let the time past of your lives suffice to have past in ignorance or neglect of God's gracious revelation to man; now delay not longer: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand;" may the day-spring from on high visit you, and the day-star arise in your hearts to give light to you, who, whilst the beams of the Sun of Righteousness are shining around you, are still lying in darkness and the shadow of death. "Search the Scriptures," and learn from them, and not from the opinions and conduct of men, what is the hope of the Christian calling; search the Scriptures, and from them learn, that ye must repent or die eternally.

May the profane, the scoffer, and the sceptic, have the veil of darkness removed from their understandings, by which "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest

the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them¹." May they not be left in wilful blindness, until that terrible day, when the enemies of the Lord shall find, to their everlasting confusion, that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even His eternal power and Godhead*: so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." May

—— "The gay, licentious, proud,
Whom pleasure, power, and affluence surround,"

learn "how hardly shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God²!" For they too often forget they are God's stewards, and accountable for all they possess. The day will come when to all of them will be addressed the command, "Give an

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

² Mark x. 23.

account of thy stewardship;" and how terrible will be their lot, should they, "having been unfaithful in the unrighteous mammon," lose "the true riches,"—treasure in heaven. Our Lord himself has said, "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon¹." They, therefore, who in their day of trial have forgotten that their rank or affluence are so many talents, for which they are to give account to their Master in heaven, must expect fearful retribution, unless, while the day of grace remaineth, they obtain pardon and peace through their long-neglected Lord. Let them now learn that the friendship of the world—whose smile they have courted, whose honours they have coveted, whose pleasures they have enjoyed—"is enmity with God." "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever²." May the avaricious and the sensual, whose grovelling, sordid, and impure minds, have not a thought, a wish, beyond this earth, where they would willingly live for ever; see their sin and folly before it be too late. Let them

¹ Luke xvi.

² 1 John ii. 16.

hear the awful denunciations of Scripture ; and may that Scripture, through God's grace, bring conviction to their minds and repentance to their hearts. " Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you ; and shall eat your flesh as it were fire : ye have heaped treasure together for the last day¹." " They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition²." " Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul³." " For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries⁴." " Let no man deceive you with vain words ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience⁵." May those who now rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, that they may increase their worldly store, receive grace " to lay up treasure in heaven," not " trusting in uncertain riches, but in the living

¹ James v.² 1 Tim. vi. 9.³ 1 Pet. ii. 11.⁴ 1 Pet. iv. 3.⁵ Ephes. v. 6.

God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy¹:" and may those who, placing few or no restraints upon the appetites and passions of their animal nature, ardently pursue impure, debasing, and guilty pleasures, have their souls so sanctified, through the power of the Holy Ghost, that, "cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God²," they may desire only "the joys unspeakable, and full of glory, which are at God's right hand for evermore." And may the envious, the censorious, and the malicious, who cherish in their hearts hostility and malignity towards their fellows, acquire the spirit of Christian charity! For "*charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.*" There exist no passions in the human breast, which in every age have excited so much scorn and reprobation amongst generous and noble spirits: there is a meanness in them which renders them contemptible; there is a malignity which makes them detestable: the virtuous heathen, therefore, viewed them with contemptuous indignation; but the Christian must mourn over such bitter fruits of an unchristian temper; he must

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 17.

² 2 Cor. vii. 1.

admonish them, that these sins of the heart, as more difficult to be repented of, are more likely to exclude from heaven than the failings which they gloat upon with secret pleasure, and publish with malicious satisfaction. The sins of uncharitableness cannot but be peculiarly odious in the sight of Him, whose religion inculcates the purest and kindest spirit of brotherly love, and who has made our forgiving our brother his trespasses, the ground of our asking the forgiveness of our own. We are, therefore, strongly and repeatedly warned in Scripture against anger, envy, hatred, revenge, and malice ; whilst the opposite virtues are urged upon us with equal force of exhortation and tenderness of entreaty. “ I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” “ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you ¹.” Let such, therefore, remembering that their only hope of forgiveness consists in their obtaining grace to overcome their un-

¹ Ephes. iv.

charitable temper and habits, hear also and obey the similar admonition of another apostle : “Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking ; as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby¹.”

May all those who make a decided profession of religion, but whose heart is not right before the Lord ; the lukewarm, the self-righteous, and the hypocritical ; learn that God will never accept of a divided heart ; that He will never approve of a self-righteous spirit, and will never receive the incense of feigned lips. Hypocrisy must be peculiarly offensive, as it is peculiarly insulting, to the Majesty of an omniscient and omnipresent God. That one of his creatures should dare to make His name or service a cloak to cover his selfish and worldly views ; should profess a great reverence for Him, only to secure the applause, or procure the assistance of men, is at once such a bold and impious fraud, as must excite the displeasure, and call down the vengeance of an insulted and offended Deity. What ! shall the weak and miserable creature who has been graciously allowed to approach his great Creator, and “ tell out his wants and unburden his sorrows to Him in prayer,”—shall he pervert to his base ends this high and holy privilege, and “ make

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 1.

long prayers, that he may be seen of men !” Such a fearful profanation resembles that of Belshazzar, when he used, at his unholy banquet, the sacred vessels taken from the Temple at Jerusalem, and with them gave honour to his false gods¹. For the hypocrite, who worships in the sanctuary to advance his worldly interest, is employing the holy ordinances of the Lord in the service of Belial, who is his god.

It may be hoped that hypocrisy of this impious nature is rare ; but neither its criminality nor its extent are sufficiently regarded by men in general. For what, in reality, are all who make merely an outward profession of religion ? they are all hypocrites : they do not attend religious worship to offer their sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to their Preserver and Benefactor ; but they pretend to do so ; and perhaps might consider themselves unjustly stigmatised, if the real cause of their being in the courts of the Lord’s house was stated to be, either regard for reputation, to set an example, general custom, or the force of habit. But if men go not to the house of prayer for worship—and those who make merely an outward profession of religion cannot be sincere in offering up any prayers—it remains that some other motive must have drawn them there ; and whatever that may be, as the real

¹ Dan. v.

but not ostensible motive, it stamps them as hypocrites. There also are, it may be feared, other hypocrites, of a very different description, who lay claim to more religion than they possess ; and, in the cause of the Lord of Hosts, profess more zeal for His honour than they feel. All such—more especially if they assume a character of which they know themselves to be totally unworthy, seeking to gratify their pride or advance their interests ; for then they are hypocrites of the worst description ;—expose themselves to the righteous displeasure of the Lord. May men, therefore, learn, that the profession of religion, without regard to its principles, will, sooner or later, bring down upon them swift and sudden destruction ; for “ the prayer of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord,” when “ they take the law of God into their mouths, but hate to be reformed in their hearts.” And whilst their principles must always correspond with their profession, their practice must be in accordance with both. The repentance of the hypocrite is extremely difficult : he has profaned, to his own ungodly purposes, all the means of grace ; and sometimes, so perfect becomes the delusion of lengthened deception, he almost believes himself really to be the character he has falsely assumed. Nothing but Divine grace can rescue him from his alarming state ; for he resembles one who has himself poisoned the wholesome aliment intended for his sus-

tenance ; still the Great Physician of souls is a sure refuge. May he, through Him, obtain mercy and pardon, and escape having “ his portion with the hypocrites, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Amongst the Pharisees it appears, from the severe reproofs our blessed Lord directed against them, that both an hypocritical and self-righteous spirit prevailed to a great extent. Such will ever be the case where the forms are substituted for the spirit of religion. It will then quickly degenerate into a number of lifeless observances, and the shadow of the religion will remain whilst the substance will be lost. Self-righteousness, in this day, rests nearly upon the same foundation as in the time of our Saviour. Amongst ourselves it is often built upon the groundwork of regularity and strictness in religious observances, and of belonging to a particular sect or party. It is often characterised by an appearance of much self-complacency and spiritual pride ; still it is at the same time distinguished generally by a correct standard of morals, a due regard for decorum, and a strict attention to religious duties. Alas ! every one must lament that the spirit is wanting which will give acceptability to these services in the sight of God : for “ thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy : I dwell in the high and holy place ; with him also that is of a contrite and humble

spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones¹." There exists not in the heart of man a feeling more perfectly irreconcilable with his corrupt and fallen nature, than spiritual pride. In the first place, "who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" And in the second, "Who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanse thou me from my secret faults! Keep thy servant also from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me: so shall I be undefiled, and innocent from the great offence²." One of the first Christian virtues is humility; and he must be equally ignorant of his own heart and of the spirit of the Gospel, who prides himself upon his excellences, instead of lamenting his deficiencies. A deep consciousness of personal unworthiness; a fearful sense of his little progress in holiness, in comparison with the advantages which have been afforded to him; a humble thankfulness that God has enabled him to advance some way in his Christian calling; and an entire dependence on his Saviour for grace, for strength, and guidance, for the time to come, generally characterize those most favoured servants of the Lord who have reached the highest attainments in piety, and best served

¹ Isa. lvii. 15.² 1 Cor. iv. 7.³ Psalm xix. 12.

their generation. May the self-righteous receive grace "to learn of Him" who was "meek and lowly of heart," and then they will find present and eternal "rest unto their souls."

"How long halt ye between two opinions?" was the indignant enquiry addressed to the Israelites by the Prophet Elijah: "If the Lord be God, follow Him; if Baal, then follow him¹." In every age there have been too many lukewarm in religion, to whom the same enquiry might be addressed, for there has ever been the same disposition to make a compromise between God and Mammon. They are unwilling to forfeit all hope of the fair "inheritance of the saints in light;" they are afraid to encounter the awful terrors of the blackness of darkness for ever; still the world, with its seductive pleasures and engrossing cares, takes a strong hold upon the heart, and is like a withering blight upon the blossoms and fruit of genuine piety.

There is no vitality of religious principle, and no consistency of religious conduct. They profess the Gospel, it is true; but they are desirous to accommodate it to their own views and wishes, that it may not interfere with their worldly advantage, nor interrupt their present enjoyments. But such a cold and calculating spirit, which appears ever to ask, "How little can I do, and yet get to heaven?"

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 21.

has nothing in it of the Gospel of Christ. Our blessed Lord employs, in the Revelations, terms expressive of the most contemptuous rejection of the works of the Church of Laodicea, because it was "lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot¹." The whole tenor of Scripture inculcates the duty of obedience to "the first and great commandment"—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind²." And they can know little of the glorious and blessed privileges of the children of God by adoption and grace, who do not habitually look up to Him as "a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus our Lord," who do not cry with humble but firm and confiding faith, "Abba, Father;" and who do not obey, with willing and joyful readiness, the command, "My Son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." There is a necessary union between adoption and grace, between grace and holiness, between holiness and love: "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God:" "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you:" "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace." They, therefore, who do not manifest in their hearts and lives those blessed proofs of the indwelling of the Spirit, renewed minds, sanctified affections, and holy obe-

¹ Rev. iii. 16.

² Matt. xxii. 37.

dience, cannot be said to “walk after the Spirit.” “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his :” he is “carnally minded ;” and “to be carnally minded is death ;” “because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Oh, how does the faithful servant of the Lord mourn over the lukewarm in religion, a class which may sometimes embrace those dearest to him on earth—united to him by the closest ties of blood—by the sweetest bonds of affection. He feels for them, for he remembers the time when he had “set his affections on things of earth :” He estimates fully the difficulties they have to surmount, for he knows how hard it is to “set the affections on things above.” For this world invites us, through the medium of the senses, with objects present, visible, and palpable ; but it is only by the power of abstraction, and through the medium of faith, we can even contemplate the future invisible and unpalpable realities of a spiritual world, whose rewards and joys are covered with a veil which revelation has only raised so far as to show, that whilst their nature transcends the power of human conception, their extent exceeds the limits of human comprehension. He fears, therefore, lest, bewildered by the false glare of earthly attractions, they may never be able to fix the steady eye of faith

upon what human "eye hath not seen, nor hath it entered into the heart of men to conceive;" he fears lest, still impelled forward in the broad way of destruction by semblances of happiness, as alluring but as illusive as the mirage of the desert, they may never enter upon the narrow and often thorny path of life, which leads to the Zion of our God.

How earnestly, therefore, does he entreat them not longer to linger in the outward courts, but to enter at once into the temple of our faith; not longer to starve themselves with "the beggarly elements of the Law," to which they secretly cling, but to refresh and invigorate their souls with the "rich mercies" of the Gospel dispensation, which supplies every want, and satisfies every desire, when fully understood, firmly believed, thankfully received, and implicitly obeyed. For it is not generally that they seek to escape the obligations to personal holiness, for they are moral men: it is not that they wish to avoid the observances of religion, for they are regular in their attendance on divine ordinances; but they will not submit themselves to the sole guidance of that Holy Spirit which can alone consecrate their prayers and sanctify their obedience. Their case is stated by St. Paul in a few words: they have "the form without the power of godliness;" and being destitute of its power, they enjoy not its present consolations,—they will possess not its future rewards, unless, by

the transforming influence of divine grace, they are enabled to give their, at present, divided hearts to God. A merely formal profession of the Gospel never yet supplied comfort in the hour of affliction—never cheered the sufferings of the bed of pain—never took away the fear of death. It may be, that when the understanding is blinded, or the heart hardened, exhausted nature sometimes willingly seeks relief from present suffering in death; but such is an awful sign of spiritual insensibility. When the conscience is fully awake, and the mind, in full possession of its powers, is conscious of the rapid approach of death; the Gospel of Christ alone has power to divest the destroyer of his terrors by robbing him of his sting, and the grave of its victory. Still it is only a heartfelt profession of the Gospel, in which the approval of the understanding, and the desire of the heart, accompany the utterance of the lips, from which issue no lifeless words, but the earnest prayer for mercy and forgiveness for faith and hope, for sanctification and submission; which, proving that grace is employed in its blessed and holy work of the soul's renewal, supports and comforts in that awful hour, when the soul is preparing to meet its God and Saviour. Oh that this consideration may have its due weight to rouse the lukewarm from their state of apathy! Can they imagine that their languid and lifeless services will be acceptable in the sight of that God,

who is Himself love, and whose motive, in offering them eternal life, is love? Can they suppose their weak faith in the Saviour, their cold reception of His inestimable blessings, will satisfy Him, who referred the ignominious and painful death He endured to the greatness of His love,—“greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends¹?” If, in the various relations of social life, the little services of affection are valued infinitely higher than the more costly benefits which spring only from a cold sense of duty:—if the willing obedience, the watchful attention, and the tender offices of love are prized, beyond all comparison, above the forced submission, the reluctant compliance, and the unwilling attendance of fear:—can we think for a moment that He, who has admitted us to all the privileges of sonship, and has allowed us to approach Him in the endearing character of children, and cry, Abba, Father, will regard favourably the services which spring from slavish fear, and not from filial love? It might be thought that the consideration of the infinite love of God towards man, and of the precious benefits conferred upon us by the Saviour, would fill every soul with gratitude and love: to think that weak, sinful, and guilty man, should be elevated to so exalted a relation to God

¹ John xv. 13.

as that of son; to remember how his title to his high dignity was purchased, by no less a sacrifice than the atonement made by Him, who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person,—present to the mind such an astounding, and yet transporting view, of “the length and breadth, and depth and height,” of “the love of God, which passeth knowledge,” that we are constrained to exclaim, “Such things are too wonderful for me; I cannot attain unto them.” And yet, they affect not, they influence not, that large class of men, the lukewarm in religion! God now calls them by “His judgments, which are in the earth,” to “turn unto Him with all their heart.” May they all receive grace, to obey the call, and seek forgiveness at his hands; for there is impending over them a most terrible curse—a curse which repentance only can avert. “If any love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha¹.”

Let, then, all the several classes of men, who, as constituting the leading divisions of those who believe not, or practise not, the truth as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord—have been exhorted and warned “to flee from the wrath to come,” be now earnestly intreated to imitate the example of the Bereans of old, who “were more noble than those in Thes-

¹ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

*salonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so*¹."

And may God accompany with his grace and blessing such study of the Scriptures, that they who have heretofore neglected, perverted, disobeyed, or rejected the Gospel, may, through "its marvellous light become wise unto salvation!"

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works²." In the "lively oracles of God," therefore, they will find instruction how to proceed in the difficult work of true repentance. Let them not, however, be dismayed at the difficulty of the undertaking, for "He who worketh in them to will and to do of His good pleasure," is ever ready to succour and omnipotent to save, "all who come unto Him" through Christ, "who is the way, the truth, and the life." Let them not fear the power of the great adversary of man, whose galling yoke they long willingly bore; "for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and

¹ Acts xvii. 11.

² 2 Tim. iii. 16.

bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ ¹." Still, at the same time, let them underrate neither the difficulties nor the dangers which await them. Spiritual as well as worldly prudence is shewn in rightly estimating difficulties, that they may be the more certainly overcome; and real courage, whether carnal or spiritual, in learning the extent of danger, that it may be, as the case requires, carefully avoided, or manfully combated.

The prophet Jeremiah, to prove the difficulty of a late repentance, has used a figure which places it in a strong light; "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil ²." The apostle Peter, to shew the extent of danger to the Christian, employs a simile not less striking, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour ³." And St. Paul accumulates the most forcible expressions to convey an adequate idea of the dangerous nature of our spiritual warfare, "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places ⁴." It is most true, that when the corruption of man's nature

¹ 2 Cor. x. 4.

² Jer. xiii. 23.

³ 1 Pet. v. 8.

⁴ Eph. vi. 12.

has been increased in malignity by the long indulgence of its sinful appetites and passions ; when his habits have become confirmed, inveterate, and almost second nature through time ; and when his severe master, the devil, seeing him planning rebellion against his authority, and escape from his power, employs his subtle arts to retain his dominion over him : we have a case in which unassisted human nature must despair. Passion is not tameable at the will of man, appetite is not mortified at his bidding, habit is not overcome at his command, the devil is not vanquished by his power. On the contrary, they all reign and rule in the heart of the unconverted, who have grown old in sin : there passion is ungovernable, appetite irresistible, habit invincible, the devil dominant and triumphant.

Well may every sinner start at this appalling picture of human weakness and depravity, and well will it be for him, if, through grace, he be thence led to exclaim—" Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ¹!" and if he be enabled to apply to his own case the answer, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. " With man it is impossible" to escape from the debasing and enslaving effects of sin, " but with God all things are possible ²;" and " thanks be

¹ Rom. vii. 24.

² Matt. xix. 26.

to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus ¹."

Through Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, we shall prove more than conquerors over the great enemies of our salvation. By the transforming power of divine grace the will becomes renewed, the passions subjugated, the appetites mortified, the habits changed ; and the devil vanquished by the great Captain of our salvation, loses his dominion over the sanctified soul. Such is the mighty change wrought in fallen and sinful man, when grace has done her perfect work ; and "renewed in the spirit of his mind," he both "proves what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of God," and "presents his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God ²."

"REPENT YE, THEREFORE, AND BE CONVERTED, THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE BLOTTED OUT, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord ³." Repent ye, who have heretofore put conviction far from you, and have refused to receive the Gospel as your standard of faith, your sole rule of life. It may be, that to you, "behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation;" it may be, that if ye will not hear His voice, but still harden your hearts, upon you may be passed the terrible and irrevocable sentence—"it

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 57.

² Rom. xii. 2.

³ Acts iii. 19.

is a people that do err in their hearts ; for they have not known my ways ; unto whom I swear in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest ¹."

GO THY WAY FOR THIS TIME, WHEN I HAVE A CONVENIENT SEASON I WILL CALL FOR THEE ;" was the language of Felix, when he "*trembled*," as Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." And such is the course adopted by thousands ; they do not violently repress the convictions of conscience ; but endeavour to lull them by that "deceitful opiate—good resolves." Not now, is still the cry, when conscience warns them ; not now, to-morrow, next year,—and thus repentance determined upon, but still deferred, flits before them like the treacherous light which often misleads unwary travellers, and lures them on with false hopes, until they plunge into the black gulf of horrible anguish and despair.

This insane procrastination, which is so common and so fatal, that it has been said, "hell's road is paved with good resolutions," arises principally from man's natural wickedness, indolence, sinfulness, and love of sin ; but it is much promoted by mistaken ideas as to the nature of repentance, which, by some, is considered at all times in their own power. This fatal error—the grand cause of which is ignorance of Scripture—is much favoured by the various

¹ Psalm xciv. 11. Acts xxiv. 25.

senses in which the term repentance is employed: it is used to express simply sorrow, sorrow and amendment, change of heart and life. Now this latter sense exactly corresponds with conversion, and the evil might, in some degree, be remedied, if there were adopted, in the case of habitual sinners, the definition of repentance given by Hammond; "A change of mind, or a conversion from sin to God; not some one bare act of change, but a lasting, durable state of new life." For men would have a difficulty in resting satisfied with indefinitely postponing repentance, if they knew that repentance to consist not merely in sorrow for sin, not merely in external amendment, but in a change of the heart, in a renewal of the mind, wrought by the Holy Ghost, and which man possesses no inherent power to effect, but which is the gift of God through Christ.

REPENT YE, THEREFORE, AND BE CONVERTED, THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE BLOTTED OUT: all who have heretofore drawn your motives and rules of actions from the world, and not from the Book of Life—and as you value your immortal souls, consider no proofs of conversion to be depended upon, except faith in the Saviour, and reliance on His merits alone for salvation; love of God as a reconciled father in Christ Jesus our Lord, shed abroad in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost; constant study of the Scriptures as the rule of life; indulgence of no known

sin ; and dependence on divine grace for spiritual guidance, strength, and consolation. Such an entire conversion of the whole man to God is generally not only a progressive, but a slow operation : during which partial relapses into old habits, which conscience soon compels them to abandon ;—unscriptural views of reconciliation with God, in which the soul cannot rest satisfied ;—and artful stratagems of the great enemy of man to win them back to wear publicly their badge of servitude, or retain them in the camp of the faithful, as in reality, though unknowingly, his deluded and secret followers ;—all impede, perplex, and endanger their course.

As the heart only knows its own bitterness, so each believer only knows the mode of God's dealing with him in bringing him to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus ¹. But the following sketch may be received as presenting the outlines of a sincere conversion ; and may the future experience of those who are now earnestly and affectionately entreated to “ turn unto God with all their hearts,” fill up the details. The conscience is first troubled through the grace of God accompanying some strong appeal ; fear is excited ; an examination is made into the state of life, and the awful truth flashes upon the mind, that they are in “ the broad way which leadeth to destruction,” and “ what is a

¹ Ephes. iv. 21.

man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul¹." He now, perhaps, attempts to appease his conscience by a compromise, by reforming, in part, his life, but retaining his darling sins ; this unholy alliance between Christ and Belial may not be, and he is ill at ease. He examines, therefore, more carefully the word of life, and feels satisfied he merits only eternal condemnation at the hand of a righteous God. His alarm becomes terror, and he sets to work in good earnest to effect an entire reformation of life, but too much in dependence on his own strength. He fails, and again and again is betrayed into his old sins, through the weakness of his nature, the power of temptation, and the want of spiritual strength. The repeated failures at length convince him of his own weakness and utter helplessness, and he begins to distrust himself, and trust more and more in his Saviour. The dark prospect now begins to brighten by the dawning of a better day, and slowly the sun of righteousness rising upon his soul, dispels the mists of error, prejudice, and passion, and reveals the Saviour as "THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE²." He sees his road more clearly, he better understands how God "made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him³," and joyfully accepts the free, unmerited,

¹ Matt. xvi. 26.² John xiv. 6.³ 2 Cor. v. 21.

and most gracious offers of salvation made in Christ Jesus our Lord, through whom, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God¹." He increases in faith, he rejoices in his privileges, he grows in grace, but he is still watchful and sober-minded: whilst he throws himself entirely on the mercy of God in Christ in whom we are "complete;" and relies on Him for His "grace, which is sufficient for us, for it is made perfect in weakness²;" he remits not his vigilance, he relaxes not his endeavours, but "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, he presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus³." He earnestly prays and labours to be enabled to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; to perfect holiness in his faith and fear, and to have his conversation in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: "who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself⁴."

The combat which awaits the young convert is severe, but not alarming, if he take the whole armour of God; "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to with-

¹ Rom. v. 1.

² 2 Cor. xii. 9.

³ Phil. iii. 13.

⁴ Tit. ii. 10.

stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

Clad in the full panoply of the Gospel, the Christian warrior has nothing to dread: for his armour is of heavenly temper; the arm of Omnipotence sustains him; and the glorious shield of the Saviour "will cover his head in the day of battle." But if the danger appear slight, let him not presume; if appalling, let him not despair; excessive confidence often risks, and despondence often loses, the battle won by undaunted, but cool and cautious courage: and of such a nature is Christian faith, by which the soldier of the cross is enabled to fulfil his baptismal vow, "not to be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end ¹."

¹ Baptismal Service.

Let not, therefore, the penitent suppose the dangers and difficulties which await him to be so great as almost to be insuperable ; nor yet that they are so small as to be easily overcome : it is sufficient for him to know, that that Master whom he serves, and who appoints his lot, will, if he commit himself to Him as a faithful Creator, supply him with strength equal to his trials, and make those trials help him forward on his heaven-ward journey. Upon setting out, however, let him be admonished, that there are three things which he ought to bear in mind.

First : let him not mistake transient feelings for settled principles, nor partial amendment for complete reformation : the sanguine sometimes, through natural temperament, are unduly elated ; the desponding, through the same cause, unduly depressed ; and thus both form false estimates as to the degree of their advancement in spiritual life. Whilst it also sometimes unfortunately happens, that after the first terrors of awakened conscience pass away, the fervours of devotional feeling subside, and there ensue listlessness, negligence, and a return to former evil courses : “ he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it ; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while ¹.” Let him, in the second place, be especi-

¹ Matt. xiii. 20.

ally on his guard against partial or perverted views of the doctrines and duties of our holy faith : some, because we are saved through faith in the merits of the Saviour, have abused the grace of God, by an unholy profession, or have under-rated the value of Christian graces and virtues ; and others, because of the obligations to personal holiness, and of the rewards held out to faithful servants, in the Gospel, have depreciated the value of faith, and have reduced the great scheme of salvation to little more than a moral obedience. And lastly, let him take care, that when, through divine grace, he has surmounted the difficulties which attend his first entrance upon the “ narrow way which leadeth unto life ;” and his ardent and confident spirit is full of eager anticipation of the eternal rest and peace which await him on his arrival at the “ city of the Living God ¹,” whose fair bulwarks the eye of faith may already have descried at an immense distance ; let him “ be not high-minded, but fear :” enemies, though invisible, still surround him ; dangers, though hidden, still lurk in his path. Should, on the other hand, the journey prove toilsome, and his spirit be often perplexed with doubts, and alarmed with fears ; should no distant prospect of the mansions of eternal rest break upon his enraptured view, solace his weary soul, and brighten his cheerless path : let

¹ Heb. ii. 10.

him not be dismayed, but hope : a “ friend that sticketh closer than a brother ¹,” though unseen, is near ; the city of refuge, though undiscoverable by his anxious eye, is nigh at hand. If, in the first case, he “ persevere unto the end ;” if, in the second, “ he faint not ;” he will reap an “ eternal and exceeding weight of glory ² ;” for, on his approach, the bright portals of the new Jerusalem shall be thrown open, and he will be welcomed by the Celestial King, with the transporting words, “ Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ³.”

II. The Christian’s duty of labouring to advance, as far as in him lies, a national reformation, under Divine visitations.

The duty of *personal reformation* under Divine visitations, has been dwelt upon at considerable length ; at once from its private and public importance : for it is thus only a national reformation can be effected. The good Christian will ever discharge equally faithfully all the duties and obligations which attach to him as an individual and as a member of society. Little is he acquainted with the Catholic spirit and scope of Christianity, who supposes the believer to be occupied solely in securing his own salvation. Such conduct would defeat its own purpose, as being incompatible with

¹ Rev. xviii. 24.

² 2 Cor. iv. 17.

³ Matt. xxv. 21.

the very nature of Christian duty ; which is not limited to the individual, his family, his friends, his neighbourhood, nor yet to his country, but extends to the whole household of faith ; to the great family of Christ ; to the whole world for which the Saviour died, and in which all should labour to promote the advancement of true religion. Whilst, therefore, the Christian is striving in secret, by means known only to God and to himself, to “ enter in at the strait gate,” “ to make his calling and election sure ;” he considers it an imperative obligation, the neglect of which would involve certain condemnation, to “ labour to advance the glory of God, and the present and future welfare of mankind.” If, then, the command, “ let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven ¹,” is to be obeyed under ordinary circumstances ; when “ GOD’S JUDGMENTS ARE IN THE EARTH,” extraordinary exertions must be made in the hope that, through the Divine blessing, “ THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD WILL LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS ².” Oh ! what extensive and blessed effects would arise if this holy principle of our faith were more generally acted upon amongst Christians ; and all, at the same time, “ walked worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness and meek-

¹ Matt. v. 16.

² Isaiah xxvi. 9.

ness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace¹." God grant that in times which require such perfect union and co-operation amongst Christians, they may receive grace to lay aside their rivalries, their divisions, their jealousies; and as there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all²;" so they may seek but one object, the extension of the Messiah's kingdom; they may employ but one means; the diffusion of the light of the Gospel; and they may know but one spirit, the spirit of charity and brotherly love.

Let then all Christians be now very zealous for the honour of the Lord of Hosts, and direct their combined efforts against the prevailing sins of the day. True believers "are the salt of the earth;" and the more abundantly they are sprinkled over the land, the more effectually the corrupting effects of sin will be counteracted: they are the "leaven" of the Gospel; and the more thoroughly they are diffused through the whole mass of society, the more certainly a national reformation will be produced.

How great is the improvement which an active and pious individual sometimes effects in a neighbourhood!—an improvement which, commencing

¹ Ephes. iv. 2, 3.

² Ephes. iv. 5, 6.

in one place, often spreads far around. How extensive then might be the blessed effects of the true servants of God acting in full and unanimous co-operation!—General alarm has caused much good to be done, in cleansing the towns and villages of the kingdom from physical pollutions; let there be shown the same zeal and energy in the removal of moral pollutions, so much more pernicious and fatal, as being destructive of both body and soul. And then this visitation “shall turn” out—as does every visitation, when duly improved—to the profit, and help forward in the right way that leadeth unto everlasting life¹,” thousands who might long have continued in a thoughtless and guilty neglect of God. For how beneficial has the furnace of affliction been often found! it is a certain assayer of religious principles; it detects the base coinage of the world, which bears indeed the Divine superscription, but is neither formed of the pure ore of the Gospel, nor stamped with the seal of the Spirit; and proves the intrinsic value of the unadulterated metal of the heavenly treasury which “cometh forth as gold².”

The leading heads of the duty of believers, as members of society, under circumstances like the present, have already been thus generally stated: let them publicly bear testimony at once to the

¹ Service for the Sick.

² Job xxiii. 10.

justice and mercy of God's dispensations ; and strive earnestly to rouse the nation to a sense of its guiltiness, which has exposed it to the divine displeasure : let them, in dependence on the blessing of Heaven, labour to eradicate all infidel and heretical opinions ; to advance a reformation of public morals, and to promote a general diffusion of true religion, sound learning, and useful knowledge. Upon these several heads it is proposed now to offer some brief observations : And may HE, who blesses the feeblest efforts made in dependence on His gracious aid, and for the honour of His great name, bless this humble endeavour to rouse some to a more active and faithful discharge of the duties of their stations ; and to excite in others a spirit of enquiry, and draw forth from them a declaration of opinion, as to the course which this Christian people should adopt under the present Divine visitation. England has been long highly favoured and greatly blessed ; she has been placed as an ensign amongst the nations, and as a city set on a hill ; she has been a depositary of genuine Christianity, and has been instrumental, in the hands of Providence, in conveying the light of the Gospel to nations " lying in darkness and the shadow of death." To her may our blessed Lord's pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem never apply : " And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying ; if thou hadst known,

even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes¹ :” rather, in this our day, may “ the Father of Lights²,” from whom “ every good gift, and every perfect gift cometh,” impart to all that are in authority, “ the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him³.” Rather, may He enable all persons to “ walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil ;—to be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is ;—giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ; submitting themselves one to another in the fear of God⁴.” Then may the storm now gathering, prove at once a punishment and a blessing from the hand of God. Seasons of danger and suffering to churches and nations have often resembled the storms of the natural world, which, however alarming and destructive at the time, are productive of subsequent good, by freeing the atmosphere from the impurities accumulated during a long season of calm and sunshine.

“ What will ye do in the day of visitation and in the desolation which shall come from far, to whom will ye flee for help ?” Such is the enquiry which

¹ Luke xix. 42.

² James i. 17.

³ Ephes. i. 17.

⁴ Ephes. v.

has been already addressed to the nation at large ; to real, and to nominal Christians ; let the faithful servants of the Lord throughout the land cause it to be sounded in the ears of a sinful nation ; and let each use the utmost extent of his individual influence, in co-operation with others, to endeavour to rouse, through the Divine blessing and guidance, a people sunk into religious indifference and apathy. They are “ visited,” and that not “ after the visitation of all men ;” for a pestilence as new in character, as fatal in its effects, has overtaken them ; and their visitation has indeed come from far, for it has travelled from the remote bounds of their colonial empire. Still we have too much cause to apprehend that there are thousands who have never considered the awful character of the visitation, nor asked themselves the question, to whom shall we flee for help ?

An irreligious age is little inclined to recognise the hand of God in the course of events, which are generally ascribed to natural causes and human means. But philosophy as well as Revelation will satisfy the mind of every impartial and deep enquirer, that nature must work under the control and direction of the great Author of nature. It would be to practically deny that God was the great governor of the universe, to suppose that nature or chance was allowed, unchecked and unguided, to produce the mighty results often referred

to its sole agency. Sherlock has stated this with great force and clearness. " The same wisdom and power which made the world must govern it too : it is only a creating power that can preserve : that which owes its very being to power must depend upon the power that made it, for it can have no principle of self-subsistence independent of its cause : it is only creating wisdom that perfectly understands the nature of all things, that sees all the springs of motion, that can correct the errors of nature, that can suspend or direct the influence of natural causes, that can govern hearts, change men's purposes, inspire wisdom and counsel, restrain or let loose their passions. It is only an Infinite Mind that can take care of all the world ; that can allot every creature its portion ; that can adjust the interests of states and kingdoms ; that can bring good out of evil, and order out of confusion ¹." It would, therefore, be not less unphilosophical than unchristian to ascribe to any spontaneous operations of nature, a new and terrible pestilence, which has swept away more than twenty millions of human beings from the face of the earth. Nor may it be accounted for by an extraordinary combination of accidental circumstances ; for " the most unexpected events, how casual soever they appear to us, are foreseen and ordered by God.' " For can we think otherwise, when we see

¹ Page 4.

as many visible marks of wisdom, and goodness, and justice, in what we call chance, as in any other acts of Providence ? Nay, when the wisdom of Providence is principally seen in the government of fortuitous events ? When we see a world wisely made, though we did not see it made, yet we conclude, that it was not made by chance, but by a Wise Being ; and by the same reason, when we see accidental events, nay, a long incoherent series of accidents concur to the producing the most admirable effects, we ought to conclude, that there is a wise invisible hand which governs chance, which of itself can do nothing wisely. When the lives and fortunes of men, the fate of kingdoms and empires, the successes of war, the changes of government are so often determined and brought about by the most visible accidents ; when chance defeats the wisest counsels and greatest power ; when good men are rewarded, and the Church of God preserved by appearing chances ; when bad men are punished by chance, and the very chance whereby they are punished, carries the marks of their sins upon it, for which they are punished ; I say, can any man in such cases think that all this is mere chance ? When, how accidental soever the means are or appear to be, whereby such things are done, there is no appearance of chance at all in the event ; but the changes and revolutions, the rewards and punishments, are

all as wisely done, as if there had been nothing of chance and accident in it. This is the great security of our lives amidst all the uncertainties of fortune, that chance itself cannot hurt us without a Divine commission. This is a sure foundation of faith, and hope, and trust in God; how calamitous and desperate soever our external condition seems to be, that God never wants means to help; that He has a thousand unseen ways, a whole army of accidents and unexpected events at command to disappoint such designs, which no visible art or power can disappoint, and to save those whom no visible power can save.¹ Nor may we suppose that this fearful pestilence is merely permitted, and not appointed and directed by God. "God's government of events consists in ordering and appointing whatever good or evil shall befall men; for according to the Scripture we must attribute such a government to God, as makes all these events *His will and doing*; and nothing can be His will and doing, but what He wills and orders. Some men think it enough to say, that God permits every thing that is done, but will by no means allow that God wills, and orders, and appoints it, which, they are afraid, will charge the divine Providence with all the evil that is done in the world; and truly so it would, did God order and appoint the evil to be

¹ Page 46.

done ; but though God orders and appoints what evils every man shall suffer, He orders and appoints no man to do the evil ; He only permits some men to do mischief, and appoints who shall suffer by it, which is the short resolution of the case. To attribute the evils which some men suffer, merely to God's permission, is to destroy the government of Providence ; for bare permission is not government¹." We arrive, therefore, at the conclusion, that this malady, which has traversed nearly the whole of two continents, is by the will and appointment of God. And none need inquire wherefore it has been sent. The dispensations of the Almighty are to reward or punish, warn and amend nations and individuals. The fearful character of the pestilence proves that it is to punish and warn the offending nations, and may it also amend and lead them, through the grace of God, to humble themselves under His mighty hand, and bow with submission to His just judgments on a guilty world !

It is, therefore, the bounden duty of the servants of the Lord, every where, privately and publicly, to bear testimony to God's government of nations and individuals. It is not sufficient that they believe, act upon, and inculcate in their families, a trust in Divine Providence. The great truth, that "THE MOST HIGH RULETH IN THE KINGDOM OF

¹ Page 61.

MEN¹," should be bound "for a sign on their heads, and as frontlets between their eyes²." They should proclaim every where, that upon this great fundamental principle, rest the prayer and worship addressed to God.—"This much is certain," observes Sherlock, "that without this belief, that God takes a particular care of all his creatures, in the government of all events that can happen to them, there is no reason nor pretence for most of the particular duties of public worship. For most of the acts of worship consider God not merely as an Universal Cause, (could we form any notion of a general providence, without any care of particular creatures, or particular events), but as our particular Patron, Protector, and Preserver.

"To fear God, and to stand in awe of His justice; to trust and depend on Him in all conditions; to submit patiently to His will, under all afflictions; to pray to Him for the supply of all our wants, for the relief of our sufferings, for protection and defence; to love and praise Him for the blessings we enjoy, for peace, and plenty, and health, for friends and benefactors, and all prosperous successes: I say, these are not the acts of reasonable men, unless they believe that God has the supreme disposal of all events, and takes a particular care of us. For if any good or evil can befall us without God's

¹ Dan. iv. 17.

² Deut. vi. 8.

particular order and appointment, we have no reason to trust in God, who does not always take care of us ; we have no reason to bear our sufferings patiently at God's hand, and in submission to His will ; for we know not whether our sufferings be God's will or not ; we have no reason to love and praise God for every blessing and deliverance we receive, because we know not whether it come from God ; and it is to no purpose to pray to God for particular blessings, if He does not concern Himself in particular events ; but if we believe that God takes a particular care of us all, and that no good or evil happens to us but as He pleases ; all these acts of religious worship are both reasonable, necessary, and just ¹."

The great duty of believers every where to declare and maintain, that " GOD GOVERNETH ALL THINGS BOTH IN HEAVEN AND EARTH," is dwelt upon more at large, because a neglect,—if not a disbelief,—of a particular Providence, which constitutes practical, and often tends to avowed infidelity, has been already stated to be one of the most crying sins,—I may almost say the most crying sin—of the day. Some openly disclaim all belief in God's government of the world ; others admit it, but are not influenced by it ; and others acknowledge a general, but deny a particular Providence. These

¹ Page 71.

latter appear not to be aware of the manifest contradiction which their belief involves. "To talk of a general Providence without God's care and government of every particular creature is manifestly unreasonable and absurd ; for, whatever reasons oblige us to own a Providence, oblige us to own a particular Providence. If creation be a reason, why God should preserve and take care of what He has made ; this is a reason why He should take care of every creature, because there is no creature, but what He made ; and if the whole world consist of particulars, it must be taken care of in the care of particulars ; for if all particulars perish, as they may do, if no care be taken to preserve them, the whole must perish. And there is the same reason for the government of mankind ; for the whole is governed in the government of parts ; and mankind cannot be well governed without the wise government of every particular man¹."

We may hope that secret disbelief, or open denial, of a Divine Providence, does not exist to a great extent ; but of this every observer must be satisfied, that a practical disregard of God's providential care and government is gaining ground in this country. Nor are its effects to be seen only in the conduct of individuals, they may be observed in the proceedings of public bodies. Nothing can

¹ Page 69.

bespeak this more strongly, than the altered language of the day as regards society, business, and public transactions.

The time was when it was carefully framed in accordance with the apostolic injunction, "for that ye ought to say IF THE LORD WILL, we shall live and do this or that¹." Now it is evidently dictated by that bold spirit of self-confidence, which "having not God in all its thoughts," says "to-day or to-morrow *we will go* into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain." Nor do the actions of men in their public and private capacities contradict their language. The time was, when this nation, sensible how highly it had been blessed by Providence, and deeply grateful to the Giver of all good, made it a rule to recognise the hand of God in all things. When His chastisements were upon the land, there was a fast; when deliverance was vouchsafed, there was a thanksgiving; every visitation was received as a just infliction; every escape as an unmerited blessing. Such was the conduct of the people and government, during their late struggle of unexampled difficulty, through which the Providence of the Almighty carried them in safety, and during which the soil of England alone was untrodden by the foot of the invader, unstained by the blood of her sons.

¹ James iv. 15.

Let, then, all the faithful servants of God, who believe in the government and confide in the protection of His Providence, "be instant in season and out of season," to counteract this evil principle which corrupts, paralyzes, and nullifies faith ; which produces pride, self-confidence, and self-complacency ; and exposes to the severe displeasure and heavy judgments of Him whom it robbeth of the honour due unto His name." History, viewed by the aid of that light which revelation has shed upon it, proves this incontestably, by supplying both individual and national examples, with the latter of which we are, at present, alone concerned.

All nations are under the government of the King of kings and Lord of lords. " His kingdom ruleth over all ;" all are instruments in His hand to accomplish the secret purpose of His will. They may be rebellious and disobedient, but they cannot harden themselves against God and prosper. He exhorts and warns, He threatens and visits ; but if they go on still in their wickedness, they soon fill up the measure of their iniquity ; the messenger of justice speeds forth, the sentence is delivered, and they cease to be a nation. It is thus great empires in succession have passed away ; human reason discovers in their rise, their progress, their decay, and their destruction, nothing more than the ordinary operation of natural causes ; revelation raises the veil which envelopes the records of remote antiquity,

and discovers the workings of a Divine agency, by which Providence overrules the selfish and short-sighted policy of man, to the development of the mighty and mysterious plans which embrace the government of the world. And that blind and presumptuous man may have no ground to suppose, that the fate of empires is dependent solely upon human causes, the overthrow of the guilty nations of antiquity, by the Divine command, was foretold, and exactly fulfilled. Hence we may learn the sudden and swift destruction, which neglect of Providence, disregard of the authority, and disobedience to the commands of Him, who has said, "I am the Lord, I change not¹," will, at last, bring upon any Christian nation, which long continues to refuse the overtures of pardon and reconciliation, made by a gracious, a merciful, and long-suffering God. Predicted destruction overtook the Assyrian and Babylonian empires; and the final desolation of their capitals was foretold. The book of the prophet Nahum opens with "the burden of Nineveh," which abounds with the most powerful descriptions of the terrible overthrow of the Assyrian empire, and the utter desolation of its vast and splendid capital. Zephaniah looks still further into futurity, and presents a sad but faithful picture of its final doom. "THE LORD WILL BE TERRIBLE UNTO THEM :"—"*And he will stretch out his hand*

¹ Malachi iii. 6.

against the north, and destroy Assyria ; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like the wilderness. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations ; both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it : their voice shall sing in the windows, desolation shall be in the thresholds ; for He shall uncover the cedar-work. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, *I am, and there is none beside me* : how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in ; every one that passeth by her shall hiss and wag his head ¹." So literally have these striking images of entire and lonely desolation been fulfilled, that in the second century, the very site of the once proud and famous capital of the Assyrian empire was matter of dispute. And as the ruin of Babylon was equally complete, so the language of prophecy is equally clear and descriptive of its entire destruction, "O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thy end is come and the measure of thy covetousness. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, *yet from ME shall spoilers come unto her, saith the Lord.* Oh Lord, thou hast spoken against this place to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever ²."

¹ Zeph. ii. 13.

² Jer. li. 13.

Nor was the fate of these empires and cities alone foretold: the long degradation of Egypt, which has been so exactly fulfilled, was predicted: "it shall be the basest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: FOR I WILL DIMINISH THEM, THAT THEY SHALL NO MORE RULE OVER THE NATIONS ¹." The evils impending over rich and proud Tyre, whilst still in the plenitude of her power and greatness were announced by Isaiah in terms very applicable to that great emporium of commerce: "Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn. Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth? THE LORD OF HOSTS HATH PURPOSED IT, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. HE *stretched out His hand over the sea*; HE *shook the kingdoms*: the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof ²." But it was reserved for Ezekiel to foretell the full extent of the fearful ruin which was to overtake this renowned city: and he has done so, in terms so brief, and yet so minutely descriptive of its present state, as to have excited the observation of all modern travellers: "*it shall*

¹ Ezek. xxix. 15.

² Isaiah xxiii. 7.

be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, FOR I HAVE SPOKEN IT, SAITH THE LORD GOD: and it shall become a spoil to the nations¹."

"I WILL MAKE *thee like the top of a rock*: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon, thou shalt be built no more; for I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord God²." Thus, when Maundrell visited the ruins of Tyre, he found "its present inhabitants to be a few wretches, subsisting chiefly by fishing, who seem to be preserved in this place by Divine Providence, as a visible argument how God has fulfilled His word concerning Tyre."

Nor were the predictive denunciations of Divine vengeance upon sinful nations, confined to times of a very remote antiquity:—the prophet's eye glancing through the long vista of coming years, foresaw, and his voice foretold, the empire which the Ruler of the destiny of nations had decreed to Greece and Rome. But there is a people which remain unto this day, at once a living testimony to the truth of Divine revelation, and a living monument of the certainty of Divine punishment. From the Jews this country may draw a very instructive lesson; for there are some striking points of agreement in their earlier history, and would that there the parallel might stop! The Jews were the peculiar people of God.—"Thou art a holy people

¹ Ezek xxvi. 5.

² Ibid. xxvi. ver. 14.

unto the Lord thy God : *the Lord thy God hath chosen thee* to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth : this kingdom has also long enjoyed an extraordinary degree of favour, protection, and blessing, at the hand of God. “ The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, *because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people* : in like manner the population of this country was small in comparison with that of many of the surrounding nations. The Jews were selected that unto them might be “ committed the oracles of God : ” so also this country appears to have been appointed, by Providence, to preserve the holy Scriptures from misinterpretation or perversion. The Jews were employed to convey to the Gentiles some knowledge of the one true God : in like manner this country appears to have been raised up to diffuse amongst distant nations the light of the Gospel. When grateful for Divine blessings, mindful of the Divine government, and obedient to the Divine laws, the Jews were abundantly blessed, and their wealth and greatness were far more than commensurate with the extent of their territory, and the resources of the kingdom : in like manner God has elevated this country to a rank amongst the nations to which her native dominions did not justify her aspiring. He has enriched her with the treasures of the world, and has invested her with

an empire upon which the sun never sets. So far the points of agreement are striking on the bright side of the picture of Jewish history; but there is also a dark side; let that also be examined, to see if there can be discovered any shades of resemblance. The Jews were thus exhorted and warned:—"When thou hast eaten and art full, *then thou shalt bless* THE LORD THY GOD, for the good land which HE HAS GIVEN THEE. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command thee this day: lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein: and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply; and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied: *then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD THY GOD,—and thou say in thine heart, my power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD THY GOD, for it is HE THAT GIVETH THEE POWER to get wealth.* And it shall be if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that *ye shall surely perish* ¹." Nor were they left in ignorance as to what would be the ministers of Divine vengeance: unfruitful seasons; and deadly pestilence;

¹ Deut. viii.

and foreign invasion, with its fearful attendants, the slaughter of the inhabitants, and the devastation of their land, were all declared to be instruments, in God's hand, to punish His ungrateful and rebellious people. Nor did the fearful enumeration of judicial inflictions stop there; they were forewarned of lengthened sieges, of the most frightful extremity of famine, of long and weary captivity in distant lands. Still there was reserved for them,—if they would not know their day of visitation,—a heavier, a more lasting and more terrible punishment. “*THE LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other.*” “*And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations, whither the Lord shall lead thee* ¹.”

The literal fulfilment of this prediction is matter of history;—nay, more, the accomplishment of the last and most terrible threat is matter of present experience; we have, unto this day, the Jews scattered amongst all people, distinct in religion, polity, and customs; unmingled with the population, unincorporated in the institutions of the nations amongst whom they sojourn: we see them a by-word, a proverb, and an astonishment, in every land: and can it be that we do not discover in them a living memorial of the Divine government

¹ Deut. xxviii. 37.

of the world, and of the Divine justice, which sooner or later overtakes every nation, which does not recognise God's authority in all things, and study to obey His laws. The condition of the Jew speaks to the Christian the language of warning and admonition: "you possess privileges I once enjoyed: I forfeited them by trusting to my own right arm, by forsaking God, by not knowing the day of my visitation: take heed lest ye come into the same state of condemnation; for it is God who ruleth in Jacob, and unto the end of the world."

Let not the warning be addressed in vain: there are fearful points of resemblance between this country and the Jews in the darker side of their national character, when the chosen people of the Lord. We are too much disposed "to say in our hearts, my power, and the might of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth:" and there is a love of the world, which falls little short of idolatry;—there is a trusting to fortune, and an ascribing events to chance and natural causes, which almost amount to deifying fortune and nature. Let, then, all the true servants of God, by their prayers, and their labours, seek, in dependence on God's blessing, a remedy of these great and growing evils. Let them appeal to the experience of the past; let them prove from sacred history that nations, which exalted themselves, have always been abased, which humbled themselves, have always been exalted: let

them shew from our own history how we have been blessed and preserved, and how we have prospered and flourished, when our trust has been in God, who alone "IS HE THAT GIVETH STRENGTH AND POWER UNTO HIS PEOPLE: BLESSED BE GOD¹!" Let them bear public testimony at once to the justice and mercy of His visitations; for whilst the pestilence speaks the language of wrath: "WOE TO THE REBELLIOUS CHILDREN, SAITH THE LORD, THAT TAKE COUNSEL, BUT NOT OF ME, and that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin²:" it speaks also the language of merciful warning and gracious exhortation: "AS MANY AS I LOVE, I REBUKE AND CHASTEN: BE ZEALOUS, THEREFORE, AND REPENT³."

It has been stated, also, to be the duty of believers, to employ every means in their power to eradicate all heretical and infidel opinions; to advance a reformation of public morals; and to promote the diffusion of true religion, sound learning, and useful knowledge: which are all so dependent one upon another, that they may be viewed in connexion, when considering the course the faithful servants of the Lord are called upon to adopt, under circumstances of almost unexampled difficulty, in this country. Once more, let them be admonished, that their lot is cast upon times which

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 35.

² Isa. xxx. 1.

³ Rev. iii. 19.

require the highest degree of energy, activity, zeal, and fidelity, in their Master's service. Let no one imagine his station in life so low, that he possesses no influence, nor consider his talents so small that he can be of no use : much would be gained if the friends of religion would all openly range themselves on the side of the Lord ; for such a demonstration of strength would overawe the enemies of the faith. But how great would be the triumph if all, whose hope is in the Lord's Christ, raised throughout the land, their voice and hands in his most holy cause ! The fact cannot be mistaken—and to disguise it would be culpable—that up to this time that decided movement has not been made by the servants of the Lord, which the awful crisis at which we have arrived so imperatively demands. Some appear to look on, whilst a furious assault is made upon the Sion of our God, with the heartless selfishness which says, "it will last my time;" others gaze with a strange apathy; others, bewildered with fear, know not how to act; and others seek only to defend and preserve their own party and property, forgetful that, if the common cause fail, they will be involved in the common destruction. But the Church of Christ is built upon a rock, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it¹." If the alarm were only sounded generally through the kingdom, the cause of the

¹ Matt. xvi. 18.

Lord would not want defenders, both numerous and powerful, and the discomfited emissaries of Satan would be driven from the field.

Mankind are always disposed to close their eyes against unpleasant objects,—to shut their ears against unwelcome truths. Thus we are willing to be deceived: if we see evils increasing, we still hope they are only partial and temporary; if alarming reports reach us, we persuade ourselves that they must be false or exaggerated. And if the danger become so near as to menace our personal safety, such is the indolence, weakness, and timidity of many, we often try to escape rather than to combat, to avert rather than to overcome, even when we know our only reasonable prospect of success is not in flight but in resistance, not in making terms with, but in vanquishing the enemy. The announcements, therefore, which have from time to time been made of the increasing activity of the emissaries of infidelity, and of the extensive circulation of sceptical, profane, and blasphemous publications, appear to have been met by the public at large either with indifference or incredulity; but the prospect is now so alarming, the peril so imminent, that all must rouse themselves, and acquit themselves like men, or they may too late have to mourn the folly of incredulity, and the sinfulness of indifference, when warned and appealed to in behalf of religion.

Let not these observations be considered otherwise than as offered in the spirit of a faithful discharge of duty : there is far from any wish to create unnecessary alarm ; there is a strong feeling that to give uncalled-for admonition, would be presumptuous, and to pass unmerited censure, would be criminal ; but he who undertakes to state the duty of a Christian people under a Divine visitation, whilst he entreats and exhorts with all meekness, and love, and reverence, must fearlessly pursue an impartial and unprejudiced course ; for terrible would be his condemnation if he intentionally extenuated the evil or compromised the truth : he would resemble the false teachers of old, who “ healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, PEACE, PEACE, WHEN THERE IS NO PEACE ¹.”

To prove, however, that these are neither the unauthorized representations of mistaken views, nor the groundless creations of false alarm, let the opinions of writers, as to the dangers which threaten the cause of religion in this country, be heard,—of writers, whose station and reputation entitle them to respect. “ The signs of the times,” observes the Bishop of London, in his Charge of last year, addressed to the clergy of his diocese,—“ the signs of the times are surely such as to indicate to him who

¹ Jer. vi. 14.

attentively observes the movements of God's providence, the approach, if not the arrival of a period pregnant with important consequences to the cause of religion. The spirit of infidelity, which at the close of the last century unhinged the frame of society, and overturned the altars of God in a neighbouring country, but was repressed, and shamed, and put to silence, by the Christian energies of this country, is again rearing its head; and the truths of the Gospel are denied, and its doctrines derided, and its blessed Author is reviled and blasphemed by men whom the force of human laws has been found unable to restrain. And if it be said that these are few in number, and insignificant in point of talent and learning, there is a more numerous class amongst us, who look upon religion merely as a necessary part of every system of government; who would introduce the principles of a miserable political economy into its institutions and ministry; and who take no personal interest in its consolations or its ordinances. And there is also a powerful and active body of men who are attempting to lay other foundations of the social virtues and duties than those which are everlastingly laid in the Gospel, and to propose other sanctions, and other rules of conduct, and other rewards, than those which are proposed in the Word of Revelation¹."

¹ Page 8.

The Bishop of Durham, in his Charge, delivered during the autumn of the present year, thus addresses his clergy :—" Yet while we would thus fain bury the past in oblivion, can we shut our eyes to the existing dangers which beset us, from whatever cause they may have arisen ? Can we look around and see Infidelity and Atheism on one side, Fanaticism on another ; Popery advancing in this direction, Socinianism in that ; dissent, lukewarmness, apathy, each with multitudes in its train, without perceiving such an accession of strength to our adversaries, as none of the present generation have ever before witnessed ? To exaggerate these evils, or to oppress the friends of religion and social order with excessive apprehensions of danger, can never be the policy of considerate men. But neither are we justified in saying ' peace, peace,' when there is no peace ; or in holding out illusory representations which every discerning observer must perceive to be unfounded ¹."

And after stating the " duties to which we are now indispensably called," the Bishop continues :—" that, in a Christian country like this, and in so advanced a stage of mental cultivation, as is the boast of the present day, it should be needful to press these admonitions, is indeed grievous. And if we enquire how it has become needful, the an-

¹ Page 15.

swer is but too obvious. The main root of the evil lies in a want of sound, sober, and practical *religious* feeling, operating steadily throughout the community, and influencing the conduct in all the various departments of social life. The want of this is discernible in attempts to carry on the work of *popular education*, without teaching *religion* for its basis; in the systematic and avowed separation of civil and political from *Christian* obligations; in the disposition to consider all truths, on whatever *sacred authority* they may rest, as matters of mere *human opinion*; and in a persuasion that the whole concern of government, of legislation, and of social order, may be conducted as if there were no MORAL RULER OF THE UNIVERSE controlling the destinies of men or of nations: no other responsibilities than those which subsist between man and man, unamenable to a higher tribunal. So long as these pernicious sentiments obtain currency amongst us, (and who will say that they do not fearfully prevail in every rank and every station?) it is impossible for any believer in a righteous Providence not to look on such a state of things with unwonted misgivings¹."

The statements as to the number, power, and malignity of the enemies of religion, made by these two Prelates, supply the powerfully sketched out-

¹ Page 44.

line of a terrible picture, which becomes still more terrific when filled up with the details which may be derived from other sources. "There is another subject," says an able writer, in the *British Critic*, "which gives us, we confess, more uneasiness, and becomes every day more difficult and painful, and that is the renewed and increasing efforts made by scoffers and infidels, not only in our country, but others, to profit by the disturbed state of the public mind, and to disseminate as widely as possible their infernal poison amongst the needy, the ignorant, and the profligate ; at once goading them to cruel disorders and excess, and robbing them of all hope of an hereafter. It cannot be known, excepting to those who make it their business to enquire, what pains, and patience, and ingenuity, are now bestowed upon this accursed work. Infidel books, and infidel teachers, we have always had ; but certainly there never was a moment when the art of corrupting the minds of the people was carried to so high a pitch, or exercised with so much effrontery ; nor ever were the fruits of it so frightfully conspicuous. It is revolting to think of them, and it were a task to make the heart sick to detail them ; but it may suffice to state, that besides the public discourses which are delivered almost daily by the great masters of the school in the Rotunda, and in other places amongst the crowded outskirts of the metropolis, *for the avowed specific purpose of advocating*

the cause of infidelity, it is a well known fact, that blasphemous and profane lectures are delivered three times a week, in the City itself, to large audiences of labourers and artizans, after their daily task is done, from each of whom a penny a piece is collected, under the head of infidel rent.

“Nor is the press behind-hand with them in their course: for whilst numerous hawkers and other emissaries scatter unsparingly in lanes and alleys their pennyworths of profanation, the great emporium blazons forth its more elaborate blasphemies with fresh spirit, in characters which those who run may read—a standing monument of its interminable hostility to the Gospel, and of the utter hopelessness of all legal measures to restrain it.”

Such was the account laid before the public in the beginning of this year, of a scheme, skilfully planned, and actively conducted, for corrupting the religious principles of the working population of the country, and thus paving the way for the ruin of social order, and the subversion of civil society. Since then the strong arm of the law has seized upon the arch infidel, but his murky den still remains: the Rotunda is said to be made the scene of more horrible impieties than ever; and the great work of teaching and disseminating infidelity, though more covertly, is equally extensively carried on.

We possess, then, certain information, supplied by these and various other distinguished writers, as

to the two facts—the progress of a secret undermining of the influence of Christianity now going forward in the middle and higher classes of society; and in the lower, of an organized system of open and violent aggression, not merely upon the principles of religion, but the decencies of life. Surely this should fill with alarm and rouse to exertion all who fear God and love their country; for the preservation of the national faith is essential to the continuance of national and individual happiness and prosperity. Before, however, examining further into these frightful evils, and offering some suggestions as to the course believers should adopt, let an enquiry be made as to their probable influence upon the moral state of the great bulk of the people.

Degeneracy of public morals must always necessarily follow corruption of public principles. As soon might you expect to draw pure water from a polluted fountain, as virtuous actions from unsound principles. Remove the restraint of conscience, and what does man become? a fickle and wicked being, of wild passions, selfish feelings, and ungovernable appetites: he has lost the ruling principle which regulated and directed his actions; and thus resembles a boat without rudder or oars, tost upon a stormy sea, which, impelled in different directions as the winds, tides, or currents happen to prevail, possesses neither certainty of direction nor steadiness of course.

It is true, when the law of God ceases to be the rule of right, men profess to substitute for it the law of honour and the law of the land. But to ascertain the value of the law of honour as the guide of life, let some of the cases of daily occurrence be observed, in which the rights of hospitality have been abused with shameless unconcern, the confidence of friendship repaid with base ingratitude, and the dearest ties of life broken with base and heartless exultation, by men of honour. Words cannot express the load of deep, of agonizing woe, which the partial substitution of the law of honour for the law of God has inflicted upon this Christian land. Families, through it, have had to suffer privations from the extravagance, and poverty from the gambling of parents ; to weep for the untimely death of a father by the hand of the duellist ; to mourn and blush for the indelible stain of a mother's shame.

Such are some of the terrible effects of the law of honour, as the guide of life, which, if it sanction not, tolerates the betrayal of innocence, the ruin of a family, and the murder of a fellow-creature.

Let an inquiry be now made into the value of the law of the land as a rule of right. Here the records of our courts of justice might suffice to shew, that severe laws do not deter from the commission of crime. This is as might be fairly calculated upon ; because the fear of uncertain or distant punishment, will never operate as an effectual re-

straint upon an unprincipled mind : it is not, that the law is without its terrors to offenders, but it is, that under the influence of some powerful inducement, the salutary effect of those terrors is lost, from their being viewed at a distance, from the hope of escaping detection, and from the power of present temptation. These observations regard principally more heinous offences ; but if the effect of the criminal code be found to be, that it operates more for the punishment than the prevention of crime, what would be the state of society, if the civil law was our great guide in transactions between man and man.

If careful only to keep within its enactments, we made inclination or interest our guide, where would be all the kind offices of Christian charity, where the interchange of friendly services, where the joys of Christian sympathy. Sad, indeed, would be the change, if, making the law of the land his sole rule of right, man, naturally weak, selfish, and sensual, gave the reins to his desires, and sought only his personal gratifications. There might, indeed, be some exceptions, but the general rule would be, “ let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” In illustration of this view of the probable effects of such a system upon society, let the case of a litigious man be supposed : what annoyance, what ill-will, what animosities, does his vexatious enforcement of the law, in the most minute par-

ticulars, often excite in a neighbourhood : but if, in addition to his being litigious, he be also irreligious,—if he be without a belief in a future state, a judgment to come, and final rewards or punishments—what a fearful aggravation of the evils at once takes place : suppose, however, further, that it is not the spirit, but the letter of the law he regards ; nay, more, that it is only its punishments he fears ; and that he breaks the law, whenever secrecy affords hope of escape, or the weakness of the party injured, chance of impunity : what a pest to society would he be !—And yet, however odious and disgusting the picture, such would the great bulk of mankind become, if they could be once brought to consider conscience a bug-bear, and Christianity an imposture.

What is it restrains appetites, the indulgence of which produces so much misery ?—Christianity. What is it subdues the desire of revenge, which thirsts for blood ?—Christianity. What is it arrests the course of secret crime ?—Christianity. What is it expands the contracted views and wishes of selfishness, and unlocks the sympathies of cold uncharitableness ?—Christianity. Have the law of honour, or the law of the land, power to produce such mighty effects ? They even lay not claim to such a power. But the benefits of Christianity stop not here. It is true, its transforming power, when its hallowing influence is fully felt, is the grandest phenomenon of

the moral world:—"the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt¹:" but above the storm, a voice is heard—the command is uttered,—“Peace, be still!” the winds of passion are hushed, the waves of appetite subside, and a holy calm reigns in the mind and heart. Still, the power of Christianity, heaven’s best gift to man, produces other benefits. It heals all the wounds which physical and moral evils cause to poor human nature. It soothes the pain of sickness, it lightens the pressure of privation, it cheers the sorrows of affliction; and, at that awful hour, when human aid is unavailing, and when the soul, trembling on the brink of eternity, can repose only on the firm stay of eternal truth, it administers solid comfort, supplies pious confidence, and whispers holy peace.—A dying hour is a severe test of principles; and it is at that hour, which unmasks hypocrisy, and proves the weakness of philosophy, the power of genuine Christianity is clearly seen:—it is at that hour, when all the world seeks for as happiness, is found to be vanity, all it calls glory, fades into insignificance, its value is fully felt; it is at that hour, when a recollection of past sins, long forsaken and repented of, is present to the humble and contrite, and a consciousness of extreme unworthiness afflicts the soul which still confides in Jesus, its victory is complete.

¹ Isaiah lvii. 20.

Well might Bishop Watson ask Gibbon, " Suppose the mighty work accomplished, the cross trampled upon, Christianity every where proscribed, and the religion of nature once more become the religion of Europe ; what advantage will you have derived to your country or to yourselves from the exchange ?—I will tell you from what you will have freed the world ; you will have freed it from its abhorrence of vice, and from every powerful incentive to virtue ; you will, with the religion, have brought back the depraved morality of Paganism ; you will have robbed mankind of their firm assurance of another life ; and thereby you will have despoiled them of their patience, of their humility, of their charity, of their chastity, of all those mild and silent virtues which, (however despicable they may appear in your eyes) are the only ones which meliorate and sublime our nature ; which Paganism never knew, which spring from Christianity alone ¹." Nor does this able writer, in his Letters to Paine, state less clearly and forcibly the evils which the infidel school inflict upon society. " In accomplishing your purpose you will have unsettled the faith of thousands ; rooted from the minds of the unhappy virtuous all their comfortable assurance of a future recompense ; have annihilated, in the minds of the flagitious, all their fears of future

¹ Apology for Christianity, p. 122.

punishment ; you will have given the reins to the domination of every passion ; and have thereby contributed to the introduction of the public insecurity, and the private unhappiness usually, and almost necessarily, accompanying a state of corrupted morals ¹.”

Would that the anti-christian school of this day could be induced to forego their unwearied exertions to make proselytes, by considering the poor substitute they have to offer for an holy faith, which is the hope of the prosperous, the consolation of the afflicted, the comfort of the sick, and the support of the dying ! To man, who feels his want of some holy light to guide his erring steps, some blessed solace to cheer an aching heart, in a world of perplexity and woe, the infidel has nothing to offer but the laws, for the guidance of his public conduct, and for his internal monitor and comforter,—a poor philosophy. But what to teach him how to die ? Nothing : for he has nothing to offer but the trite aphorisms of heathen philosophers. What to take away the fear of something after death ? Nothing : for he who believes nothing which Christianity has revealed can know nothing of a state of future existence, uncognizable by unassisted reason.

Miserable men ! the Christian mourns over the wilful blindness which, in the full blaze of the meri-

¹ Apology for the Bible, p. 2.

dian sun, continues in darkness, a state which is but a faint emblem of "the blackness of darkness for ever." Most guilty men ! the Christian burns with holy indignation against their perverted and wicked zeal for proselytism, of whom it may be said, " Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves¹." If the infidel reflects, what must be his state of mind, when he remembers, how often, whilst feeling the utter wretchedness of his dark and cheerless creed, he has sought with artful sophistry to bewilder the understandings of the ignorant, and, with cold heartlessness, to blast the hopes of the virtuous ! He who openly stabs or secretly poisons an associate, incurs a less load of moral guilt than he who inflicts a wound and instils a poison, which, rankling, causes misery in this life, and in the next, anguish unutterable and interminable.

Fatal, however, as such a creed must be to the best interests of society, wherever its influence prevails, it assumes a still more alarming aspect as inculcated by those infidel teachers, who, disseminating their pestilent doctrines amongst our working population, not only seek to destroy all the hopes and fears of an hereafter, but to stimulate their evil passions, and to produce a contempt not

¹ Matt. xxiii. 15.

less for human than Divine laws. If once principles so subversive of the civil and religious obligations of man, as a member of a Christian community, were allowed gradually to leaven the great mass of the population; not only would the cause of religion and morals be deeply injured, but eventually the altars of God would be overthrown, the bonds of civil society broken, and anarchy, spoliation, and bloodshed, reign through the land. With the great bulk of mankind, the sense of responsibility, present and future, is the great restraint upon their evil inclinations. Philosophers may talk of the eternal fitness of things, the beauty of virtue, the value of the distinctions of rank, of unequal divisions of property, and the necessity of order, subordination, and industry, for the well-being of society: but once remove from the minds of the lower classes their fear of punishment,—by destroying all belief in a future state of retribution, and all dread of the laws of the land, the execution of which they overawe, defeat, or defy, by their numbers,—and there will be confusion, aggression, outrage, and a general attack upon property. Constituted as man is by nature, and constituted as society is by law and custom, in a Christian country, as soon as Revelation is rejected by the great bulk of the people, the work of disorder and disorganization must be rapidly carried on, until the whole frame-work of society be broken up.

The grand principle by which society is held together, in a free country, is religious and moral influence controlling and directing physical force to the good of the whole community. Emancipate physical force from the salutary restraints and guidance by which its violence and turbulence are checked, and its mighty energies beneficially directed and employed, and the same results will ensue, as would occur, were that mighty engine,—the proudest boast of modern science,—the steam-engine, deprived of the nice adjustments and counterbalances which have rendered its formidable powers of easy, safe, and useful application. The frightful destruction which attends the explosion of a steam-engine, would be more than paralleled by the sudden rending asunder of the bands of society, when physical force, released from the government of religious and moral influence, bursts forth with the full sweep of its tremendous powers. Abstract principles, and philosophical theories, weigh not a feather with the great bulk of mankind, who are far more under the direction of their passions than their judgment. Suppose the case of one man rich,—and it may be, possessing more than he appears to require,—surrounded by many who are poor and needy. What prevents the many from plundering the one? not abstract principles of natural justice, not a philosophical respect for the rights of property, but regard for Divine and human

laws: remove the restraints of conscience, and the fear of punishment, and the many poor will rush upon the rich few, like a pack of hungry wolves upon scattered and defenceless sheep.

This admits of easy proof: it is an undeniable axiom in morals, that vice brings with it its own punishment; how then does it come to pass that it abounds to such a fearful extent in society? It needs not any very extensive acquaintance with life to return the answer, which appears to be the true one,—that where there is not religious principles the truths of morality are less powerful than the impulses of passion, and present gratification is willingly purchased, even at the expense of much after suffering. Suppose, then, both religion and morals discarded; and man left, not merely to the unrestrained indulgence of his evil passions, but those passions excited by intoxicating and maddening stimulants, what then would be the consequences? The heart sickens whilst the mind pictures to itself some of the frightful excesses, the horrible enormities, of which one man may be capable under such circumstances. Suppose, further, not one man only, but a large proportion of the labouring population of a country exposed to the artful and wicked devices of infidel and seditious demagogues, corrupting the principles, by profane and blasphemous writings; exciting angry and vindictive feelings by exaggerated or false tales

of injustice and wrong ; fostering hatred and malignity towards the rich, by representing them as the oppressors and robbers of the poor, by whose labour they live ; and stimulating their natural cupidity and sensuality by hopes of plunder, of ease, and of enjoyment ; what, then, would be the consequences ? Let the history of France return the answer, for it is written in characters of blood, in her annals, when, through the influence of a party, at first small, and apparently contemptible, she became revolutionised, demoralised, unchristianised. Birth, rank, and wealth, were alone sufficient to expose their possessors to democratic violence and fury ; when all laws, human and Divine, broken,—all institutions, civil and religious, overturned, regicide and apostate France subverted the throne, and trampled upon the cross ; and the demons of disorder, spoliation, and butchery, stalked through her land, deluged with the best blood of her children.

The conclusion, then, at which the impartial and dispassionate enquirer will arrive,—a conclusion which has received the terrible sanction of experience,—is, that the most horrible consequences will result to society when physical force is released from the salutary restraints of religious and moral influence.

When unchristianised, man becomes a sort of demon : he riots in the licentiousness of his assumed

freedom from obligations Divine and human ; and if leagued in a diabolical conspiracy against religion, laws, and property,—against all that is virtuous, noble, and praiseworthy,—he is involved as he advances, deeper and deeper in danger and guilt ; as the crisis approaches, he is impelled forward in his headlong career, with a rapidity which allows no time for reflection, with a force which defies resistance, until at last he is swallowed up in the wide ruin of universal tumult and disorder : like one who commits himself to the guidance of a stream, ignorant or regardless of the distant cataract, towards which it is flowing : borne along by its powerful current, he is, at first, delighted with his swift and unchecked progress, but as he proceeds, the rapidity and force of the stream fearfully increase, until at last, drawn within the full influence of the fall, he is swept along with tremendous violence towards the verge of precipitation, whence he shoots into the boiling gulf below—a gulf which is no unfit emblem of society, heaving, foaming, and roaring, under the domination of physical force.

Let not, however, the useful and awful lesson which the French revolution teaches be thus hastily dismissed : human nature is always the same, and similar causes will produce similar results, however modified by circumstances. A length of time was required in that country to sow the seeds of infidelity, but as soon as they had taken deep root in

the public mind, their effects were apparent ; their growth was as rapid as it was luxuriant, and they bore such a deadly crop as fills the mind with disgust and horror. Nor was the field of operation of the antichristian conspiracy confined to France, the great object of which was, every where to accomplish the defamation and discredit of the Christian religion, where it could not effect its entire overthrow.

Let the portrait, therefore, be examined which Bishop Horseley has supplied us with of those times, which must be still fresh in the recollection of some ; it is drawn with the power and effect of a master in his art ; would it were only interesting as a vivid sketch by a contemporary, of dangers passed away ! it speaks even now with a warning voice to this country.

“ The whole of Europe, with the exception of France only, and those miserable countries which France has fraternized, is yet nominally Christian : but for the last thirty years or more, we have seen in every part of it but little correspondence between the lives of men and their professions ; a general indifference about the doctrines of Christianity ; a general neglect of its duties ; no reverent observance of its rites. The centre from which the mischief has spread is France. In that kingdom the mystery of iniquity began to work somewhat earlier than the middle of the century which is just passed

away. Its machinations at first were secret, unperceived, disguised. Its instruments were persons in no conspicuous stations. But by the persevering zeal of an individual, who, by an affectation of a depth of universal learning which he never possessed—by audacity in the circulation of what he knew to be falsified history—by a counterfeit zeal for toleration ; but above all, by a certain brilliancy of unprincipled wit, contrived to acquire a celebrity for his name, and a deference to his opinions, far beyond the proportion of what might be justly due either to his talents or attainments, though neither the one nor the other were inconsiderable ;—by the persevering zeal, I say, of this miscreant, throughout a long, though an infirm and sickly life of bold active impiety, a conspiracy was formed of all the wit, the science, the philosophy, and the politics, not of France only, but of many other countries, for the extirpation of the Christian name. The art, the industry, the disguise, the deep-laid policy with which the nefarious plot was carried on ; the numbers of all ranks and descriptions which were drawn in to take part in it—men of letters first, then magistrates, nobles, ministers of state, sovereign princes : last of all, the inferior ranks, merchants, attornies, bankers' clerks, tradesmen, mechanics, peasants ; the eagerness with which, under the direction of their chief, all these contributed their power, their influence, their ingenuity, their

industry, their labour, in their respective situations and occupations in life, to the advancement of the one great object of the confederacy, are facts that are indeed astonishing ¹.”

“The success of this vast enterprise of impiety was beyond any thing that could have been expected by any but the first projector, from the littleness of its beginnings ².” “The apostacy of the French nation, and the subversion of the Gallican Church, however unexpected at the time in Europe, was not a sudden event : it was not one of those spontaneous revolutions in public opinion which are to be traced to no definite beginning, to no certain cause : it was not the effect of any real grievance of the people, proceeding as hath been falsely pretended, from the rapacity and the ambition of their clergy : it was the catastrophe and accomplishment of a premeditated plot—a plot conceived in mere malice, carried on with steady, unrelenting malignity, for half a century ³.”

Such is the account which one of the ablest writers England ever produced has left behind him, of the origin and progress of a conspiracy against Christianity, the effects of which he also witnessed in this country, but by the blessing of God on the labours of himself and others, lived to see happily counteracted. There is much, it is true, which

¹ Charges, p. 117.

² Ibid. p. 128.

³ Ibid. p. 134.

does not correspond with the aspect of the present times ; with which, however, a very superficial acquaintance will satisfy every enquiring mind that there is also much which applies to them too well. It is not likely that the operations of infidelity will be precisely the same at different periods, though the object remains unaltered : still even in their plans and machinery, there will often be found great resemblance. The infidel scheme in France was commenced by men of letters ; in this country at present, its most open and fierce advocates are amongst the low and half-educated classes : still we have seen that in the middle and higher classes there is gaining ground not “ a direct attack on the evidences of Christianity or on the value of its doctrines ;” but “ the distinctive character of modern unbelief is the attempt to supersede Christianity, and to make men moral without its guiding and restraining influence ¹.” There is here a much greater resemblance than might be at first supposed, between the two plans of operation, now and at the close of the last century. The attack was then made with the most masterly skill : care was taken that the prejudices of education, as they were considered, should at first be treated with tenderness ; and the way gradually prepared for the reception of opinions, which, if at once presented to the

¹ Rose's *Prevailing Disposition towards Christianity*, p. 77.

uncorrupted mind, would have been rejected with horror. To use an illustration in perfect accordance with their views, the light of impiety was to be gradually let in upon an eye, which had long been clouded by the cataract of superstition, lest it should prefer the darkness of error to the full blaze of truth. We find, therefore, no premature development of immoral and impious doctrines : superstition, bigotry, intolerance, were strongly condemned ; clerical abuses and exactions fiercely inveighed against ; but pure religion and morality were commended. “ In this country,” writes Horseley, “ I believe they know very well that bold undisguised atheism, proceeding directly and openly to its horrid purpose, will never be successful. They must have recourse, therefore, to cautious stratagem ; they must pretend that their object is not to demolish, but reform : and it was with a view of giving colour to this pretence, that the impudent lie—for such I have proved it to be—has been propagated in this country of their reverence for pure Christianity, and for the Reformation.” But there was one invariable feature of all their proceedings, never lost sight of, a rancorous and malignant hostility to the established Church ; and unwearied exertions “ to alienate the minds of the people from the established clergy, by representing them as sordid worldlings, without any concern about the souls of men, indifferent to the religion

which they ought to teach, to which the laity are attached, and destitute of the Spirit of God ¹." Here, then, we have a direct parallel between those times and the present, in which, indeed, the balance of evil is against us, for, "the Church of England," observes a living prelate², "never, perhaps, hitherto has had to contend with so great a number of open and avowed enemies; who, in their reiterated and persevering attacks, stop short of no misrepresentations, however flagrant, which tend to hold it up to public scorn and indignation."

After making every allowance, indeed, for the popular excitement, which may be of only temporary duration; for the resentful feelings, which may pass away with the occasion which has excited them; still there remains sufficient to justify the worst apprehensions, and to demand the most strenuous exertions at counteraction of the friends of order and religion. It is not merely that there is a want of veneration, love and value for the Church; but a rancorous hatred, spurred on by eager desire of spoliation, is manifested, wherever infidel teachers have made proselytes to their wicked creed. Respect, also, for constituted authorities, is destroyed, by their inculcating the audacious falsehood, that civil government has been framed, to enable the few to rule

¹ Page 145.

² Bishop of Durham.

the many. Value for the laws has been lessened, by their declaring, there is one law for the rich, and another for the poor. And the bonds of affection and kind offices, which united the pastor and the parishioner, the landlord and the tenant, have been almost every where weakened, and in some places broken, by more than the base insinuation, by the assertion, that the forbearance and kindness shown, originate not in friendly regard and Christian charity, but in the ignoble wish of buying golden opinions,—in the pusillanimous desire of propitiating men roused to a sense of their injuries,—of disarming of their angry passions men panting for retaliation and revenge. Thus the force of the public and social obligations of life have been impaired, and those kind ties and sympathies, which bind man to man in their several relations, are converted by the poison of infidel principles, into food for malignant feelings, which inwardly rankle in the heart, and which outwardly evince themselves by discontent, distrust, and dislike; and when the opportunity presents itself, by violence, aggression, and outrage. The effects of such a state of things, if not counteracted, cannot be contemplated, without the most painful apprehension, for, as it has been powerfully expressed, “fatal must be the consequences, if the monstrous fiends of blasphemy and disorganization now going about seeking whom they may devour, and stalk-

ing openly through the land, with menace and defiance, be suffered to take undisturbed possession of our peasants and artificers, or of those on whom they immediately depend for their support.

We have already seen the system of extensive combinations carried on in defiance of the laws ;—organized bands and tumultuous assemblages of peasantry, extorting money, and enforcing their demands with threats of violence ;—wanton destruction of property, in the breaking of machinery, in attacks upon private houses, and in the far more horrible crime of the nocturnal incendiary ;—violence and excesses in many towns ;—and riot, pillage, and arson, defying for some days, in a great city, municipal authorities and military force.

Now when all these fearful evils are viewed in connection with the general increase of crime, more particularly of juvenile delinquency ; with the abuse and profanation of the sabbath, and neglect of the public ordinances of religion, and with the unsound views in faith and morals which extensively prevail—the shades of the gloomy picture gradually darken. But it is capable of receiving some further tints, and then the moral state of the kingdom, which has been studiously kept as far as possible distinct from the political, will stand forth, it is believed, under such an appalling aspect as to satisfy men, of all parties, of the necessity of prompt and vigorous exertion, of strong and efficient reme-

dies. Amongst the great body of the people have sprung up contempt for antiquity, disregard for established usages, disrespect for rank, love of innovation, clamorous discontent, and fierce desire of change, which impel them forward with blind and presumptuous confidence in their own wisdom, and with reckless indifference as to what may be the consequences of their precipitation and rashness. The public press, which exercises a fearful despotism—and political leaders, whose authority is scarcely less absolute—urge forward an already over-excited people, instead of attempting to allay the rising storm which threatens to involve all in the common ruin of social order, public property, and national credit.

The urgent importance of the question, What is to be done? cannot but force itself upon the attention of the most supine—of the most indifferent to their country's safety and welfare; and surely only one answer can be returned—repair any injuries which time may have caused to the goodly edifice of the Church, or to the fair fabric of the Constitution, striving, at the same time, by a general diffusion of true religion, sound learning, and useful knowledge, to secure the eradication of heretical and infidel opinions, and the reformation of public morals; and by the blessing of God, the storm will pass away, and leave the Church and Constitution unscathed. True Christian wisdom

revolts from any concession of principle, but not less so from any defence of error ; it yields not to popular clamour and threats in matters of duty, but it thankfully receives the admonition given in the spirit of kindness, and profits even by the warning of an enemy, to remove any slight blemishes, which, affecting not the foundation of the Church built on a rock, appear externally, and tempt the rash and rude hand of bold and unhallowed reparation.

It is the height of political wisdom to know when to refuse, and when to concede popular claims. To refuse just claims is equally wicked and unwise ; it is not only an act of injustice, as debarring the people from their rights, but it destroys confidence and respect—it produces fierce discontent, exasperation, and vindictiveness towards their rulers ; and, in the end, if the claimants be powerful, that is extorted as a right which was first asked as a boon. To concede unfounded claims is equally weak and unwise ; it stimulates the eager and grasping spirit of demand, it rarely conciliates for the time, but never satisfies ; it causes that unsettled expecting and excited state of the public mind so unfavourable to national contentment, happiness, and prosperity ; and if the system be long continued—and every new concession, by weakening the strength of the yielding party, will make it more difficult to change the system—security after security, privi-

lege after privilege having been surrendered, the petitioners will become the framers of the laws—the claimants, the dispensers of privileges—the governed, the governing power in the kingdom. At the awful crisis at which we have arrived it is the bounden duty of all men to forget party distinctions, to divest themselves of party spirit, to have no object in view but the honour of God and the general good. Let, therefore, the claims of the people be dispassionately and impartially weighed ; not, however, abstractedly, but with relation to the general good ; and let these claims be conceded so far as they may be granted consistently with the rights of property, the integrity of the constitution, the interests of religion, and the welfare of the empire. And having made every concession which justice demands, and which the real interests not only of the claimants, but of society at large, sanction, let the whole energies of government and the nation be directed to crushing the seditious and blasphemous associations which are actively employed in exciting discontent and insubordination, and in corrupting the principles of our agricultural and manufacturing population ; and let every means be employed to calm the agitation of the public mind—to restore it to that peaceful, healthful, and contented state, which once so much distinguished the people of England.

To effect, however, this great object, the co-

operation of that mighty engine of good or evil—the public press, is essential. When the information, the talent, the eloquence, which are so conspicuous in many of our leading journals are considered, we cease to wonder at the immense influence they possess over the public mind ; for partly through indolence, partly through ignorance, a large proportion of men are disposed to adopt, without examination, opinions which come recommended by the authority of a name they have been accustomed to respect and value. How beneficial, then, would be the consequences to society, if the public press would use more moderation ; if instead of swelling the storm which is raging through the land, it would pour oil upon the heaving and troubled waters ; if, instead of advocating the interests of a party, the public good was made of paramount importance. It is melancholy to observe the pernicious influence of party spirit upon the public press of this country : it is not only that it excites rancour and bitterness of feeling, but even truth, viewed through the medium of its jaundiced eye, appears like falsehood—beauty, like deformity—virtue, like vice. Of this we have at present a too complete proof in the misrepresentations, the misstatements, the calumnies, which have been directed against the Established Church. The writers cannot be so ignorant as not to know the charges are substantially false,—they cannot be so dishonest as

to give circulation to what they know to be untrue, and therefore, as they publish the most false and calumnious allegations against the Clergy, it can only be, that the mists of party distort objects,—the prejudices of party misconstrue motives,—the spirit of party perverts facts. Let it not be said that the liberty of the press has degenerated into such licentiousness, that many public journals have willingly and premeditatedly been guilty of the monstrous wickedness of traducing and vilifying, and holding up to public scorn and reprobation, the Clergy of the Established Church, but rather that, under the delirium of a political fever, they have unconsciously loaded with unmerited opprobrium, and most unjustly held up to public odium, the Clergy, who, as a body, are distinguished for their talents, their learning, their piety, and their zeal in their Great Master's holy cause.

A deep debt of justice remains due to the Established Church ; and to the sense of right, and to the good feelings of those who have joined in the cry against it, this appeal is made. There is not any disposition on the part of the Clergy to ask for undue favour or commendation :—no wish, that abuses, if they exist, should be spared,—that delinquency, if any case occur, should escape punishment. But they protest against the manifest injustice with which they have been treated. The most extravagant over-statements of a few valuable

appointments have been industriously circulated, as a proof of excessive and overgrown wealth, whilst the poverty of some high dignities, and a large proportion of benefices, has been studiously kept back; the failings and offences of a few individuals, under every form of exaggeration and perversion, have been dwelt and enlarged upon with evident satisfaction, whilst no just meed of praise has been bestowed upon the body, to which rather the censure, due only to some few members, has ingeniously, but wickedly, been made to attach. All which misrepresentations apparently have in view one object,—that the charges of excessive wealth and extreme worthlessness may stimulate and justify spoliation and subversion. And yet no angry recriminations, scarcely any indignant remonstrances, have issued from the injured party: when they have spoken, it has been in the calm language of conscious rectitude; and the great body have forbore to reply to insult and invective, relying on the goodness of their cause, to which they feel assured the people of England will, sooner or later, do full justice. If aught could soften the harsh severity, could shame the cruel injustice with which the Clergy have been censured, vilified, and persecuted, surely it should be the Christian meekness and patience with which they have borne the heavy load of wrong that has been cast upon them. Full many there are who, unmoved by clamour,

unprovoked by injuries, and unappalled by dangers, are pursuing the even tenor of their way, in the diligent and faithful discharge of their sacred duties. But silence under grievous charges is often interpreted into an admission of their truth, and meekness under heavy reproaches a proof of their justice. There are times, therefore, when the Clergy should raise their voice in self-vindication; not merely for their own sakes, but that of their flocks; for if they allow their office to be degraded, and their characters aspersed, without maintaining the one and defending the other, their influence will be seriously weakened, and their usefulness, in the same degree, diminished. Hence it has ever been the artful policy of the infidel school to attack religion through her ministers; and such is the course which is adopted now, and those ministers will aid and abet the cause of the enemies of their faith, if they repel not the darts which are meant to reach, through their bodies, the altars of their God. And would that that portion of the press, which has long assailed the Clergy with much unmerited severity and abuse, could be persuaded to make a tardy reparation for the wrong they have done,—for the injury they have inflicted on society! The public journals now reach the remotest corners of the island; and in many distant parishes, in which the incumbent alone spends the income drawn from the soil, alone dispenses his charity,

visits the sick, instructs the ignorant,—even there the blighting influence of calumny extends, and the work of Christian benevolence and charity is neutralized by the splenetic effusions, or foul and false charges of the public press. Oh! that the awful circumstances of the present times would teach forbearance, if not justice,—would induce silence, if not commendation. If they love not religion for its own sake,—if they respect not its ministers for their own sake,—let the value of both be admitted in stemming that fearful tide of sedition and infidelity which threatens to overturn the civil as well as religious institutions of the country. And there is another consideration not to be forgotten: in times of pestilence, the ministers of God have ever proved faithful to their trust, and a blessing to the sick and dying: that scourge of the Almighty is now upon the land; let the press then seek to heal the breach they have made between the pastor and his flock, lest by the baleful suspicions and hatred they have caused in the minds of the latter, they may be the means of intercepting the stream of Divine mercy,—of darkening the light of Divine truth.

Vain will be all the efforts of the friends of religion and order to counteract the present evils, which endanger the best interests of society, and to introduce a better order of things, if a large proportion of the public journals continue not only to excite the public mind, but to prejudice it against

the Clergy, by imputing to them unworthy motives, and by bringing against them heavy and unsubstantiated charges. In many places at present, the plans of the Clergyman for the benefit of his parish are entirely frustrated ; a large proportion of his parishioners being like men labouring under a fever caused by injudicious treatment,—the wholesome aliment, which would give nourishment and strength in a healthy state, injures rather than benefits ; and even the medicines which should cure the disease are rejected, through distrust of the physician who prescribes them. But let those who have injured the patient, by supplying stimulants when they should have administered sedatives, by exciting suspicion when they should have inspired confidence, endeavour to repair the evil they have produced, and then the ministers of the Great Physician of souls will recover their proper influence, and will be able beneficially to exercise their important functions.

It is impossible to estimate the advantage of the ministerial office to society, until the aggregate of the services of men, who have all their allotted field of action throughout the kingdom, be well weighed. Let any one examine minutely into the benefit which one parish receives from a resident incumbent, who faithfully discharges the duties of his office ; and if all do not so, it is the fault of the individual, and not of the system :—let him

observe, not merely the general advantage derived by all from the residence amongst them of a well informed and well conducted man,—at once the scholar, the gentleman, and the Christian,—but of one who is the authorized medium through which abuses are to be checked and corrected, vice discountenanced and reproved, virtue encouraged and rewarded, relief administered to distress, instruction to ignorance, comfort to sorrow, and the light of the Gospel diffused amongst all,—its offers addressed to all, its consolation imparted to all. Then let him attempt to calculate the amount of instruction conveyed through “the alacrity, the zeal, the warm-heartedness which the Established Clergy have manifested for the education of the poor¹,” of comfort derived by suffering in its hour of need and sorrow, from its faithful pastor; and of benefit imparted to all, either directly or indirectly, either temporally or spiritually, by the appointed and responsible teachers of the Gospel, throughout the parishes in the kingdom. And then let him form a judgment as to what degree of confidence is to be placed in the wisdom, what sense of obligation is to be entertained for the services,—*not of those* who are labouring with earnest diligence to “feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost has

¹ Lord Brougham’s speech in the Commons, on the Education of the Poor.

made them overseers,"—*of those* who by impoverishing the Clergy would deprive them of the means of affording temporal assistance to the poor and needy ; and by calumniating the Clergy would impede the discharge and frustrate the efficacy of their spiritual ministrations. Alas ! it is because the full value of the quiet and unobtrusive labours of all ranks in the Church is so little known by those who are actively engaged in public life, that plans are devised, which, possessing some plausibility, and coming recommended with much eloquence, are eagerly embraced by many, who would indignantly reject them were they aware that, if adopted, they would injure the present and endanger the eternal welfare of millions. As men, as statesmen, and as Christians, let all who have inconsiderately joined in the cry against the Church forbear, until they have ascertained for themselves, by minute and impartial investigation, whether it is as wealthy and proud, as grasping and worldly, as bigoted and intolerant, as intermeddling and domineering, as inefficient and corrupt, as its enemies have represented it to be. Could it be proved to be such, every sincere Christian, whether cleric or laic, would at once say, free it from the abuses which disgrace its character and impair its efficiency. But of the charges brought against it, the large proportion originate in the hostility, hatred, and malignity of its enemies ; there may be some defects, but

they are incidental, not inherent, and are at present occupying the deep and anxious attention of the heads of the establishment, who are most desirous to correct whatever may limit the influence or lessen the usefulness of that pure and reformed branch of the Church of Christ established in this kingdom.

If the enemies of the Church, who profess to be the friends of mankind, are sincere, as we are bound to consider them, in the expression of their wish to benefit their fellow-men, they must not impede the operation of an establishment which every where diffuses a knowledge of that Gospel, the salutary influence of which extends through society, as the only cure of the ills to which flesh is heir. They may closely watch and severely scrutinize the proceedings of the Church; but, as men and Christians, they are bound to do it justice, and give it their support as a powerful agent, in lightening the load of misery which too often exists in this commercial country to a frightful extent. “Compare,” says the present Bishop of Chester, “compare the ignorant and unreflecting peasant, who moves in the same dull, and too often sinful track, with no ideas beyond the ground he treads upon, the sensual indulgences which he gratifies, and the day that is passing over his head;—compare him with his enlightened neighbour, nay, with himself, if happily he becomes enlightened, when he follows

the same path of active industry, but makes it a path towards his heavenly Father's kingdom ;— and then perceive, by a visible example, what the grace of God effects through the agency of man ; or take a case, too common, alas ! too familiarly known to many who hear me. Take the case of those who see their occupation sinking from under them ; their means of support annually decreasing, and little prospect of its melioration. Suppose that the views of these, and such as these, are bounded by this present world, what can they be but unhappy, restless, discontented ; defying God, and murmuring at man ; distressing the philanthropist, because he sees no comfort left to them ; distressing the stateman, because he can devise no remedy for their relief ; above all, distressing the Christian, who sees the future prospect far darker than the present gloom ? Suppose the case of one thus circumstanced, having no hope beyond this world ; and then contemplate the change which would be produced, if any of the means by which grace is communicated to the heart should inspire the same person with the principles and the faith of the Gospel ; converting him from whatever is evil in his ways, and thus removing all the accumulation which sin adds to poverty : reconciling him to hardships and privations as the intended trial of his faith, the lot of many of God's most approved servants ; and lighting up the darkness of

this world by the rays which precede that which is to come, the earnest of a brighter dawn."

May those who have been so far misled as to become either hostile or indifferent to their Church now do tardy justice to her, which, through good report and evil report, is still true to her righteous and holy cause, and dispenses through the land the light and blessing of the Gospel of peace: may those who love, cherish, and venerate the religion of their fathers—the Church of their God—approve themselves zealous and faithful sons; our Zion requires active, stanch, vigilant, and experienced defenders: her enemies are numerous, persevering, powerful, malignant, implacable; their attacks are sometimes open, sometimes insidious, but always skilfully planned, and ably conducted; still, whilst the Church continues true to God and His Christ, she has nothing to fear, for "greater is He who is for her than he who is against her." "The Lord is her shield and buckler," and Christ has promised to be always, even unto the end of the world, with his Church, which is founded on the rock of faith, and against which "the gates of hell shall not prevail:" in humble, but firm reliance, therefore, upon Him, of whose mystical body she forms a portion, the Church of England, amid the strifes of political changes, amid the distractions of civil contentions, amid the storms

of popular clamour and fury, remains steadfast through faith, and joyful through hope :

“ As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
 Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
 Tho' round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
 Eternal sunshine settles on its head.”

Whilst, however, we rely with firm and holy confidence upon the Great Author and Finisher of our Faith, for the protection and preservation of His Church; zeal, energy, and discretion, in defence of religion, are not the less requisite in believers, who labour under their Heavenly Master for the furtherance of His Gospel. As the Almighty is pleased to employ human agents for the accomplishment of His gracious designs towards His creatures; His faithful servants hoping to prove instruments, in His hands, of good to their fellow men, must use every means in their power to frustrate the evil designs of the enemies of the Lord; and to induce a sinful nation, suffering under a Divine visitation, to put away from them “the evil of their ways,” which has called down the Divine displeasure; and humbling themselves before God to implore His mercy, “that the plague may be stayed from the people¹.” Let, then, all the servants of the Lord,

¹ 2 Sam. xxiv. 21.

at this alarming and awful crisis, “be very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts¹,” and pray and labour incessantly for the defeat of the devices of unbelief; which, whether under the form of an irreligious spirit seeking to do without Christianity, or under the bolder aspect of open infidelity, striving to subvert Christianity, is the main cause of the evils which now endanger the safety of the civil and religious institutions of the kingdom. We have seen that, in the case of the lower classes of society, the tide of profaneness has been setting in with a force and fury which threaten to overturn all the defences of religion, morals, and laws, which have long withstood their fierce assaults—their destructive ravages. Can it be that the emissaries of Satan shall be found more zealous and indefatigable in disseminating the poison which is to destroy both body and soul, than the servants of God are vigilant, active, and unwearied, to prevent the bane or supply the antidote? Can it be that the slaves of sin and darkness, under the galling yoke of him who is a hard master, will manifest a more willing and prompt obedience, than the servants of God, in the cause of their blessed Lord, whose “burden is light,”—“whose service is perfect freedom?” We have seen, also, that in the middle and higher

¹ I Kings xix. 10.

classes of society there appears to be an equally effective, though less conspicuous, agent at work—a deep and silent current, which is gradually, though secretly, undermining that great foundation of Christianity, that the law of God is to be the rule of life. This great engine of evil, as more insidious, is, in reality, more dangerous than the noisy turbulence of infidel assemblies, or the open circulation of blasphemous publications; the power of the spirit of darkness, when, “as a roaring lion he walketh about seeking whom he may devour,” is less to be dreaded, than when he employs the noiseless gliding of “the serpent,” which discovers itself only by the sting of death. Can it be that any of the friends of religion will shut their ears against these representations of great and alarming danger—delude themselves with the groundless anticipations of unjustifiable hope—deceive themselves with the distant plans of culpable procrastination—or shroud themselves beneath the covering of indolent supineness and heartless indifference? Too long palliatives have been employed instead of remedies, expediency has been substituted for principle, and worldly wisdom has encroached upon the province of Divine Revelation. As a Christian nation our laws and institutions should be all essentially Christian; the foreign and domestic policy of the State, and the public and private con-

duct of individuals, should be all animated by a Christian spirit, and guided by Christian rules and precedents.

Let us, therefore, enquire by what means is the predominance of Christianity to be restored, when it is threatened with still further depression ; when it has great and powerful enemies all plotting its destruction in this country ?

There is one mean—to which reference has been already made, as being the great object the believer should have in view—which would, with the blessing of God, upon whom alone dependence must rest for success against His enemies, be effectual in accomplishing this great end, and that is the zealous and unanimous co-operation of all Christians for the general diffusion of true religion, sound learning, and useful knowledge. A very brief examination into the cause which has contributed largely to the present state of things, so unfavourable to the interests of genuine Christianity, may suffice to place this in a clear point of view.

Religious error generally receives its distinguishing features from the literary character of the age : and an age which abounds with sciolists is very fertile in sceptics. For it has been always found that the effect of superficial knowledge is rather to unsettle, of profound knowledge to confirm, belief in Revelation ; as was well observed by that mighty master in philosophy, Bacon, who says, “ a little

philosophy inclines us to atheism, and a great deal of philosophy carries us back to religion." And the reason of this is obvious; there are certain difficulties of every subject which lie upon, or nearly at, the surface; slight labour and research, therefore, put the enquirer in possession of little more than those difficulties; whilst if the spirit of patient and accurate investigation had carried him further, he would have found them gradually disappear before the light of truth breaking by degrees upon his mind, and leading him to just and certain conclusions, drawn from a long series of proofs. Now the present age appears to be characterized by a wide diffusion of elementary knowledge amongst all classes of society; by a preference of an extensive, though necessarily superficial, acquaintance with general literature and the elements of modern science, to an accurate and profound knowledge of a few leading branches of study; and by a tendency to elevate the pursuit of physical above that of moral and religious truth. From the proposition laid down, of the ordinary effects of superficial knowledge upon the mind in the investigation of religious truth, we should conclude, that such a system of popular instruction is calculated to indispose towards the full reception of a Divine Revelation; that the mind, either bewildered by a variety of pursuits, or dissatisfied by diversity of opinions, will consider all knowledge uncertain, and

all theories unsatisfactory ; or influenced by that intellectual pride and presumption which are amongst the most bitter fruits of defective knowledge, deem itself competent to decide summarily upon whatever passes under its observation. For if it has been found—as it has been too often found—that minds, otherwise highly gifted, but destitute of religious principles, when long accustomed to demonstration, are apt to underrate the value of moral proof ; and when long familiar with natural causes, sometimes forget the great Architect, who formed and put in motion our globe ; sometimes forget the great First Cause, which gave nature her powers and properties, and now preserves and directs them to a beneficial end : what must we expect when far inferior minds, without mental discipline and profound knowledge, those happy results of laborious and patient study ; but with vanity flattered by appeals made to its judgment, and with pride fostered by the acquisition of a poor modicum of science, deem themselves competent not merely to decide upon the most difficult questions of government and legislation, but upon the most profound truths of natural and revealed religion ? The result may be easily anticipated ; if this empty vanity, this presumptuous pride of intellect, reject not Christianity at once, it ordinarily takes an heretical direction, and assuming the specious guise of love of investigation,

and value for the powers of reason, it makes the deep and awful mysteries of our holy faith the subject of crude theories and daring speculations ; and with powers confessedly unequal to the explanation of some of the lowest wonders of the material world, seeks to penetrate within the veil drawn around the Godhead, and reduce to the level of human comprehension the very nature of the Divine essence. Should it, however, take one step further, and that an easy step, it rejects the truths it had long distorted, it resigns the shadow of which it had never known the substance, and declaring Christianity to be “a cunningly devised fable,” it becomes the advocate of heartless, hopeless infidelity.

This is no imaginary picture, but one, of the reality and fidelity of which the present state of society affords too abundant proof. Not that superficial acquaintance with science is a thing of new occurrence ; not that pride of intellect—ever a luxuriant weed in rich but ill-cultivated soils,—is a growth peculiar to our times ; not that heresy and infidelity, its bitterest fruits, never till now spread their poison through our land ; but never before was the field so large, the weeds more rank, and the crop so abundant. Formerly, science flowed in a few deep and noble rivers, of whose copious waters the nation at large sparingly drank ; we still have many rich streams which fertilize the

land, but in addition to them there is an infinity of small rivulets, some of which, like mountain torrents, after a thunder-storm, are brawling and turbulent, covered with much foam, mixed with much impurity, often rising over their banks, and spreading havoc and barrenness, where all was fertility and beauty. Such streams may serve to illustrate the effects, upon society, of the violence and turbulence of those, whose imperfect acquaintance with science has first shaken their own belief, and has then been made instrumental to the spread of infidel doctrines, amongst those who had lived in happy ignorance of "science, falsely so called." But would any one, therefore, be so unwise as to endeavour to keep these turbulent brooks pent up? The destruction would be only wider and heavier when they at last burst over the mounds that restrained them: but it is at once the course of wisdom and of humanity to confine them within their banks, and give them a due direction, and then, as they descend towards the plain, gradually the brawling ceases, the froth disappears, the mud subsides, and you have a pure and quiet stream diffusing the riches, refreshment, and beauty of science over the land. No calumny has, perhaps, been more frequently repeated in the present day than that those who expose the perversion, are the enemies of science. But in spite of interested clamour and unjust censure, the Christian is bound

to maintain, that knowledge is valuable in the degree in which it makes men not merely wiser but better : and that however he may approve of literary and scientific pursuits, however ready he may be to extol their value, for great indeed is their value, still their highest value is in proving subsidiary to the acquisition of Christian knowledge. Whilst, therefore, he recommends their attainment, because they are calculated to enlighten and invigorate the mind, correct and refine the taste, exalt and dignify the character, to supply a rational and unfailing source of relaxation and enjoyment, he must ever maintain, that unless hallowed with some portion of that "wisdom which is from above," they will be useless to their possessor, and may, by a mischievous perversion, not only be fatal to his present and future happiness, but injurious to the best interests of a community.

That the extension of education has contributed to the production of such evils is true, but it is not less true, that education is not fairly chargeable with accidental and separable consequences. The fault has been, that the provision for the religious instruction of the age, notwithstanding the zeal and activity shewn to accomplish this great object, has not increased in the same ratio with that for its advancement in literature and science. The supply of the mental wants of the middle and lower classes of society, which have received this powerful im-

pulsion towards knowledge, has been too much in the hands of those who avowedly exclude religion from their system of popular education. Thus, a much neglected soil has been broken up, and prepared for cultivation, but "whilst men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares in the field;" the Lord's labourers, however, are not therefore to desert the field, but to employ, for the future, more watchful vigilance, more earnest zeal, and more assiduous labour. There is no benefit nor blessing which is not capable of perversion and abuse; but it would be a strange act of folly to refuse a manifest advantage, through fear of contingent evil, both the prevention and correction of which are in our own power. "The almost universal diffusion of elementary knowledge furnishes the enemies of revealed religion with abundant materials to work upon: but then it also furnishes the friends of truth with the obvious means of counteracting the influence of erroneous doctrines, and of instilling sounder principles into the bulk of the community. Any attempt to suppress, or even to check, the spirit of inquiry, which is abroad in the world, would not only be a vain and fruitless attempt, but a violation of the indefeasible liberty of the human mind, and an interference with its natural constitution. To impart to that spirit a right direction, to sanctify it with holy motives, to temper it to righteous purposes, to shape it to ends which lie beyond

the limits of this beginning of our existence, will be the endeavour of those who desire to make the cultivation of intellect conducive to moral improvement, and to establish the kingdom of Christ at once in the understanding and affections of mankind¹.”

Let, then, all the friends of religion employ some portion of their time, their influence, and their wealth, in zealously labouring to promote a general diffusion of true religion, sound learning, and useful knowledge. Let them be assured that the mental cultivation of the population of a country, when properly conducted, will, by elevating the moral character, always have a beneficial influence upon society; that it can only be properly conducted when religion forms the basis of the system of instruction; and that the present ardent thirst for knowledge will be productive of lasting evil or good to the best interests of England, accordingly as it is, or is not, directed to an object of paramount importance, to that fountain of “living water” which floweth for our salvation.

When religion has been made the basis of education, and the principles of revelation have been clearly understood, and cordially embraced, a slight acquaintance with science not only ceases to have any injurious effect upon the mind, but benefits it,

¹ Bishop of London's Charge.

as the acquisition of useful knowledge must always do : in the humility, faith, stability, and knowledge of true religion, there is a safe-guard against the evils usually attendant upon a superficial acquaintance with natural philosophy in minds ill-disciplined and ill-informed. Nor is it only that physical science benefits minds early imbued with religious principles ; a knowledge of many of its departments opens a new and unfailing source of high and pure enjoyment ; it supplies, as it were, a new sense : before, Creation presented a beautiful and varied picture, delighting the eye, and filling the heart with gladness. But it was in a degree like the picture of a great master, to one unacquainted with painting ; the general beauty, and happiness of effect, were discoverable, but there was not the full satisfaction which the connoisseur derives from his knowledge of the art ; upon the former, the general effect principally makes an impression ; with the latter, not only the general effect, but all the variety of details, all the happy combinations, which have united to produce that effect, are seen, understood, and appreciated ; and there results the high gratification felt by a cultivated mind, when the eye is pleased, the understanding exercised, and the judgment satisfied. However inadequate every illustration, drawn from art, must be to convey any just conception of the impression which the works of nature are calculated to make

upon the enlightened mind ; still this may afford a faint parallel of the advantage which scientific men possess over those who have never studied the book of nature. For physical science improves the perception of the beauties, whilst it unfolds the wonders, of creation : not only do the great results of nature's works become, through it, better understood ; but the causes and modes of operation, by which those results are accomplished, are discovered : and the student becomes more full of delight and admiration, the further his researches extend ; he traces the nice connexion, which every where exists between causes and effects ; and surveys, with wonder and praise, the beautiful contrivances, the admirable adaptations, the perfect harmony, which reign throughout the creation of God. His mind thus becomes deeply and powerfully impressed with the uniform perfection visible in the works of the Deity : if he observe with his telescope a planet,—one of those bright bodies which gem the canopy of heaven,—or examine with his microscope an insect,—one of the minutest beings which sport in the summer's sunshine,—he still sees the same perfection ; “ those rolling fires on high ” perform their appointed revolutions, in their several orbits, directed by unvarying laws ; and the tiny insect, equally complete in its organization, exercises, with an instinct as unerring, its allotted functions.

The whole material universe supplies the student

of nature with a rich field, at once, of investigation and enjoyment: the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms, all disclose their treasures to his inquiring mind; which is not, however, limited by the narrow bounds of our terraqueous globe, but ranges through the fields of ether, far as the eye can penetrate into the distant regions of illimitable space. Throughout he is delighted to trace the hand of the Creator; to observe every where design and arrangement; nothing superfluous, nothing in vain, but the mighty machinery of a stupendous system; in the great principles of which there is sublime simplicity, in their operations unvarying accuracy and matchless contrivance, in their details endless variety and infinite combinations, and in their effects utility, beauty, grandeur, and magnificence. The works of the Almighty far exceed the full comprehension of finite intelligence, but much further do they transcend adequate description in uninspired language: man feels all his feebleness of intellect and of expression, when he attempts to penetrate deeply into, or to describe accurately, the mighty works of God; he is then constrained to confess, “such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; I cannot attain unto it¹.” “Oh Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy

¹ Psalm cxxxix. 5.

riches ; so is the great and wide sea also ¹." " The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy-work ²." " By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together, as it were upon an heap, and layeth up the deep, as in a treasure-house. Let the earth fear the Lord : stand in awe of Him, all ye that dwell in the world. For He spake, and it was done ; He commanded, and it stood fast ³." And he breaks forth in the devout hymn of the Psalmist ; " Praise the Lord, oh my soul : oh Lord my God, Thou art become exceeding glorious : Thou art clothed with majesty and honour. Thou deckest Thyself with light, as it were with a garment : and spreadest out the heavens like a curtain. Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters, and maketh the clouds His chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind."

When philosophy is thus sanctified by Christianity, the volume of nature presents, after the volume of inspiration, the most instructive and delightful study of man ; in both he can read, as if written by a sun-beam, the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Most High. Would, then, any wish to debar others from the high intellectual feast which nature bountifully spreads before all,

¹ Psalm civ. 24.

² Ibid. xix. i.

³ Ibid. xxxiii. 8, 9.

and of which she pressingly invites all to partake ? Such would be to limit or to divert the streams of Divine bounty, whilst flowing in their proper channels : such would be to make a monopoly of one of heaven's best and freest gifts to man, whilst a pilgrim in this world of woe,—the admonitions which nature addressing to the enlightened and thoughtful mind,

“ Leads it upward to a brighter day.”

Would any say, Gaze as long as you like upon the beauties and wonders of nature, but attempt not to explore its hidden secrets—to examine the latent springs of its vast and complicated machinery ? Such would be, as if a man possessing a curious and exquisite piece of mechanism were to direct the observers to remark the beauty of the material, the regularity of the movements, and the certainty of the results, and yet to forbid them to examine into the principle of construction and the mode of operation, on which those movements and that certainty depend. For the proportion, in which he who has studied the structure of the globe, the wonderful mechanism of the universe, as far as Revelation and reason have enabled men to go, derives from its contemplation greater enjoyment and instruction than he who treads the earth, traverses the seas, and gazes upon the heavens, ignorant of all philosophy can teach, is the same

as that in which he who understands mechanics receives greater pleasure and information, than he who understands them not, from examining the process of a masterly application of the powers of that science.

Let, therefore, the knowledge of physical science be widely diffused, but let the basis of Christian principles be first laid; for thus not only may the evil of scepticism be provided against, but the field of moral and intellectual enjoyment and improvement will be enlarged to the student; for never does the study of the material universe more elevate the mind, and expand the heart, than when we are accustomed to refer every thing to a great and gracious Creator,—to look habitually

“ Through nature up to nature's God.”

“ We know that there is a superficial philosophy, which casts the glare of a most seducing brilliancy around it; and spurns the Bible, with all the doctrine and all the piety of the Bible, away from it; and has infused the spirit of Antichrist into many of the literary establishments of the age: but it is not the solid, the profound, the cautious spirit of that philosophy, which has done so much to ennoble the modern period of our world; for the more that this spirit is cultivated and understood, the more will it be found in alliance with that Spirit, in virtue of which all that exalteth itself against the knowledge

of God is humbled, and all lofty imaginations are cast down, and every thought of the heart is brought into the captivity of the obedience of Christ ¹."

The first great principle, therefore, which all must steadily keep in view and strenuously advocate, is that *the Bible should form the basis of education*. It is not sufficient to say, that education is to be conducted on religious principles, for on the subject of religion there exists, in this day, a most unfortunate and mischievous variety of opinions, which would be much diminished if the Holy Scriptures were made the real, as they are the professed, groundwork of every system of Christian instruction. Two other great principles, which the true servants of God should strongly recommend and enforce, as being intimately and necessarily connected with the first—that the Bible is to be the basis of education,—are, that *the Bible is to be the rule of faith, and the guide of public and private life*. From a neglect of these three great principles of Christian conduct, it is hardly too much to say, that almost all the evils which afflict society have arisen: for they all reciprocate, and mutually contribute to their common perpetuation. The man of the world educates his son in the way best calculated to promote his temporal advancement: and that son, in his turn,

¹ Chalmers' Revelation viewed in connexion with Modern Astronomy.

when he becomes a father, is regardless of the eternal interests of his child, which he has never been taught to value. For the system begun in childhood is continued through all the stages of life ; and “ the spirit returns unto God who gave it,” having been occupied almost to the last moment of human existence with the pursuit of worldly advantage and enjoyment. Here we have, consequently, only the name of Christianity ; for neither do its motives influence, nor its rules guide the conduct : there may be the external form, but there is not the power of godliness ; there may be the cold and lifeless statue, there is not the living Christian, possessed of intelligence, volition, and motion, and animated by faith and hope,—the origin, exercise, and direction of which belong to the Spirit of God. This is a necessary consequence of that neglect of the Bible, which has been already noticed as being such a prolific source of error. There is very general in the world a standard of faith and morals, which Scripture does not recognize, and a reliance upon Divine mercy, which Scripture does not sanction. Thus the world calls vices venial, which Scripture says shall exclude from heaven ; and the world speaks peace, where Scripture pronounces woe. Take, however, the life of a large body of men, trace it from the cradle to the grave ; observe in childhood its toys, in boyhood its sports, in youth its pleasures, in manhood its

occupations and enjoyments, and in age its employments ; all in succession deemed of supreme importance, and the excessive indulgence of which has never been considered criminal : then take the Bible, and compare the survey you have made with what it reveals of the nature and object of man's probation ; and the conclusion will force itself irresistibly and painfully upon you, that as life is to be a state of moral discipline to fit the heir of immortality for his bright inheritance, the life, which has been depicted, is not that which will lead to the blessed mansions of heaven.

Against this spurious Christianity, let the friends of true religion every where raise their voice, for like a currency of base coin, it is not only without value in itself, but deludes its possessor with the false idea of possessing wealth. Let them point out the folly and the danger of receiving religious opinions from the world, instead of from God's book ; for as the light of the sun is coloured by the stained glass through which it passes, so the rays of Divine truth, being tinged by the perverted medium through which they are received, may deceive those who imagine they are enjoying the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. And let them warn all against walking by another's light,—though he may appear “ a shining and a burning light ”—instead of searching for themselves the lively oracles of Scripture ; it may be, as in the case of a party in a dark

and dangerous cavern, where few only possess lamps, that the whole may proceed in safety ; but surely the security is not so great as if each possessed his own lamp ; and great would be the folly of him, who warned of the danger, and assured of the necessity of having a lamp of his own, rejected the friendly offer of assistance, which would guide him in safety, and trusted to the uncertain light of another, which, falling on broken and uneven ground, deceived the eye, and risked his precipitation into some deep abyss, from which extrication was impossible.

Let them every where teach and impress, as a duty of paramount importance, that not only the education of all classes, from the prince to the peasant, should be conducted on the principles of the Bible ; but that all should acquire that knowledge of the evidences as well as doctrines and duties of Christianity, which may fit them in their several stations to overcome, through the grace of God, the temptations to unbelief or immorality, which are likely to assail them. It is a painful reflection, how many youths of bright prospects, great talents, and amiable dispositions, have made shipwreck of their present and eternal hopes, from a want of early religious instruction. How many are less ashamed of being found ignorant of the Bible than any other book, and whilst they would blush not to be acquainted with some new, though unim-

portant, discovery in science, feel no shame in never having learnt the important discoveries made by Revelation to man. And how many, in an evil age, want courage to admit a knowledge of the Bible, with the great truths of which they have been made imperfectly acquainted, but have neither learnt their value nor imbibed their spirit.

Let, therefore, the true servants of the Lord labour diligently to counteract the rationalizing spirit in theology, the neglect of Divine Providence, the ascription of every thing to natural causes, the endeavour, in short, to do without Christianity in the affairs of life, which so extensively prevail. And let them discountenance and repress, and, when fitted by previous education and study, refute the objections which scepticism and infidelity now advance in society, not only unblushingly avowing their unbelief, but attempting to spread its poison in private families. It would not be for the advantage of religion to commit to inexperienced hands the weapons of controversy, for the great strength of infidelity lies in perplexing subtilities and ingenious sophisms, which are calculated to puzzle an ill-read and illogical disputant. But every Christian should “know the certainty of those things wherein he has been instructed¹.” “And be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason

¹ Luke i. 4.

of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear¹." The neglect of instruction in the evidences, in the general system of religious education, is at once most unwise, and most calculated fearfully to promote the spread of unbelief: in the first place, it is like attempting to build a house without laying a good foundation: the winds and floods of infidelity assail it, and it falls, because built on sand: in the second place, the fall of one house generally more or less injures those adjoining: thus the cause of unbelief is advanced, not only by the accession of every new convert, but by the shock which his fall occasions to the faith of his friends and acquaintance. Let, therefore, the friends of religion at once secure to the evidences their proper place in every system of education, and also take care that their own principles be fortified by that sound "knowledge which maketh not ashamed." Let them never suffer the cause of God to be blasphemed, or the truth of religion denied in society, without entering, at least, their protest; and let them never suffer the questions and doubts of scepticism to be propounded in their families, without at once silencing the dangerous inmate, who seeks to spread his secret poison, by inviting enquiry and provoking discussion. It is true many of the objections urged in society are of a nature which little learning, in

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 15.

addition to good common sense, may suffice to answer. As, for instance, the existence of mysteries in Christianity ; whilst, in truth, the absence of mysteries in a Revelation would be a strong argument against its Divine origin : the terms employed in creeds and articles, the form of worship and the discipline of the Church ; for all of which Christianity is not strictly liable, as, though in perfect conformity with, some of them have been engrafted upon, Revelation : and the sins into which believers, who disgrace their profession, are betrayed ; for which Christianity cannot be to blame, as it would be most manifest injustice to visit upon a Revelation, the offences of unworthy members, of which their own sinfulness is the sole cause. But such is the mode of warfare of the light troops of the infidel host, who dare not attack directly the evidences, doctrines, and precepts of the Gospel ; and yet from their numbers, activity, and malignity, have deeply injured the cause of religion, by insinuating doubts, and instilling suspicions into ill-informed and inexperienced minds.

If those who bear the Christian name and believe the Christian faith would unite against this legion of evil spirits, and employ their rank, influence, talents, and learning, in bringing them into subjection to Him, whose easy yoke they have thrown off, for the service of Satan, the cause of religion would be immensely benefited. Not only because many unbelievers would probably be converted, but be-

cause the work of proselytism would be checked : at present, from the culpable supineness and indifference of many Christians, even in private families, infidelity is sometimes heard, unblushingly, to avow its detestable principles ; but if the ban of proscription was placed upon its creed, the ears of believers would not be shocked, and the principles of the inexperienced endangered by direct or indirect attacks upon the great truths of our most Holy Faith.

To effect a general co-operation of the great body of Christians, in the cause of religion, would be, necessarily, a work of immense difficulty and labour. Much, however, might be accomplished, if more of those, whom God has blessed with power and influence, set an example of labouring zealously to promote His glory and the advancement of His kingdom. How often, amongst the higher and middle classes of society, has the influence of a single individual, of talents and learning, but of still more eminent piety, been employed with the most beneficial effects. “ A word spoken in due season, how good is it ¹,” has been fully proved, in the case of many, who, vibrating, as it were, in such perfect equipoise between good and evil, that a feather would almost suffice to incline the balance, have been led to “ choose that good part, which shall

¹ Prov. xv. 23.

not be taken away from them¹;" by having books recommended or supplied, by receiving friendly advice and encouragement, or by that most eloquent and attractive of the modes of conveying instruction—the winning grace and beauty of Christian example. If, therefore, even a few individuals or families, in any place, resolved that, by Divine grace, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord²;" I will not be "unequally yoked with unbelievers³;" as far as in me lieth, no one shall blaspheme the Holy Name by which I am called, nor malign the holy cause which in baptism I have sworn to defend; infidelity would be much put to shame and silence. And it is the duty of all sincere Christians to adopt this course, for they are bound to use every means in their power, to discourage infidelity; they must not admit it into the intimacy and confidence of domestic life; the sacrifice may sometimes be painful, but it must be made; there may not be any compromise of Christian obligations, which forbid every unholy alliance: "for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth, with an infidel⁴?" Believers must warn, exhort, entreat, and, if in their power,

¹ Luke x. 42.

² Joshua xxiv. 15.

³ 2 Cor. vi. 14.

⁴ 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

instruct the unbeliever; but, if in vain, then the divine command applies, “ come out from among them, and be ye separate :” if both parties be sincere, the contrariety of habits, feelings, sentiments, and even of enjoyments, which exists between them, must render familiar intercourse little agreeable or profitable to the servant of God ; who, if he be a weak or wavering disciple, may receive much injury, where he cannot benefit ; and, if he be a firm and established disciple, when he finds his efforts to convince the gainsayer fruitless, however ready he may still continue to be to lend assistance, to admonish, and to observe all the courtesies of life ; yet he cannot assign a place in his heart, or receive as a chosen and favoured associate, one who is not united with him in the sweet bonds of Christian fellowship : there exists a bar, for the present, insuperable, why such may not be addressed in the affectionate language of the Psalmist, “ thou, my companion, my guide, and mine own familiar friend ;” and that bar is, they cannot “ take sweet counsel together, and walk in the house of God as friends ¹.”

To defeat, however, the devices and to frustrate the labours of the emissaries of infidelity amongst the labouring population of the country, religious associations should be formed : for an evil of such magnitude will never be remedied, until there are the

¹ Psalm lv. 14.

more extensive and effective results of well concerted and combined operations, in the place of the desultory movements of partial or individual zeal. This it may be said is already done by societies, amongst which the venerable Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge has stood forward with the most praiseworthy zeal and activity to stem the tide of infidelity, which has been, during the last year, spreading poison and death. But increased efficiency would be given even to the labours of this valuable Society, by associations of the nature proposed; the object of which would be, not only the present remedy, but the prevention of evils so dangerous to the best interests of society. And how great might be the blessed effects, in checking the secret and open enemies of the Gospel, if its true friends stood forward, and united heart and hand with their appointed pastors—giving them all the aid of their rank and influence, and acting, under their superintendence and direction, in the discharge of duties, which may with propriety be delegated to laymen!

A writer, who has been already quoted at considerable length, to shew the deep devices, the bold effrontery, the unwearied zeal, and the alarming success of infidel teachers in the metropolis, asks the important question, “ what is to be done in a state of things like this? Shall we look calmly on, and say, let them alone; the authors and propa-

gators of the mischief are profligate and worthless men, whom nobody will trust ; and, therefore, too contemptible to be noticed. Alas ! we should only deceive ourselves, and be led to neglect others, by taking this flattering unction to our souls.—It is clear, therefore, that some active and present remedy must be brought to meet the evil ; and there is none which presents itself so readily and so naturally, as that which may be derived from the arguments, and the testimony, and the advice of the true friends of Christianity, particularly of the ministers.” But the whole labour must not devolve upon the clergy : not from any wish to spare them, whose duty it is ever to be found in the van, in every attack upon the enemies of the Lord,—and ever to bear the brunt of the battle ; but because the active co-operation of the laity is essential to the success of the undertaking. It has been the artful policy of the infidel teachers to endeavour to persuade their ignorant auditors that our holy religion is a system of priestcraft ; in the preservation of which its ministers will always, necessarily, be actively engaged, because they are deeply interested. The deluded followers, therefore, of this satanic school, may look with more than a suspicious eye upon the anxious labours of their pastor to undeceive them ; they may read in it a direct confirmation of what they have heard, and ascribe solely to self-interest what emanates

from the pious zeal and sense of duty of him who "watches over them as one that is to give account." But when they see associated with the minister, in the work of Christian charity and instruction, laymen, whom they know to have no inducement to support a system of fraud, and whom they may believe to be too honest and honourable to promote the cause of error, they are more likely to banish the suspicion of unworthy motives, which, in the present distempered state of their minds, opposes an insuperable bar to the reception of religious truth.

We have had in all our towns, and even in many large villages, boards of health formed to visit and enquire into the state of the poor; let similar religious boards be established under the direction of the parochial clergy, to promote their spiritual health. Numerous and great are the evils which have arisen from the population of many parishes having increased beyond the means of accommodation in the parish churches and almost beyond the personal visitation and superintendence of the parochial clergy. It has given rise to much almost compulsory secession from the Church, has weakened the influence of the Clergy, and has been productive of the still greater evils of immorality, irreligion, and impiety. Plans, therefore, have been drawn up and acted upon with the most happy effect in some places, for the formation of visiting societies. These

have already received the sanction of two prelates, who preside over populous dioceses, the Bishops of London and Chester, who have both recommended them in their Charges to their Clergy. "The vastness of the field," observes the Bishop of London, "which demands their exertions, and their own insufficiency to meet that demand according to the promptings of their conscience, and the impulse of a truly Christian charity, are matters which lie heavily upon the mind of many faithful zealous clergymen. In the discharge of those duties which, in a populous parish, far exceed the physical abilities of the strongest and most devoted minister, great assistance may be derived from parochial visiting associations, acting in subordination to the Clergy. By kind, yet not intrusive enquiry into the wants, both temporal and spiritual, of the poor; by well-timed aid, by encouragement, and counsel; by exhortations to the duty of reading the Scriptures, of public worship, of sanctifying the Lord's Day, of regulating the behaviour of their children; by directing them, in cases of sickness, or of ignorance, or of troubled conscience, to their appointed pastor, such an association may work incalculable good, and become powerfully, though indirectly, instrumental in preaching the Gospel to the poor. But it is incumbent on me to caution the parochial Clergy against relinquishing the superintendence and direction of these auxiliary labourers; and

against delegating to them their own peculiar functions and duties, as the commissioned interpreters of Scripture, as the Lord's remembrancers for his people, and as the appointed guides of their devotion. There is a special promise of blessing annexed to ministerial service ; and the sense of that specialty ought not to be effaced from the minds of our flocks, by the permitted intrusion of laymen, however pious and zealous, into that which belongs to our own peculiar office. If this be not attended to, you must expect that tares will spring up in the wheat, and that your visiting societies will become so many nurseries of schism ¹."

The Bishop of Chester, after giving a striking description of the transforming power of Divine grace, thus continues—" And can these things be ? ' O Lord God thou knowest.' Earnestness, disinterestedness, simplicity, godly sincerity, patience in teaching, watchfulness in seizing the favourable moment for counsel, are known to overcome even that which seems most hopeless ; the effects of natural corruption, inflamed by evil example, and strengthened by habits of wilful disobedience.

" It will be asked, however, ' Who is sufficient,' physically ' sufficient for these things ?' Certainly in our larger parishes it is not possible for the strength or activity of the Clergy alone to provide

¹ Page 21.

for such individual instruction. But, there is a resource at hand : when the population is moderate, nothing is wanting but resolution and contrivance ; and in the case of a denser population, the bane and the antidote, the evil and the remedy are found together. The same population, which presses so heavily, affords also that variety of ranks and degree of superior education, that many fellow-workers may assist the minister, and diminish his labours. In this manner the Apostles were enabled to execute the manifold concerns which lay upon them.”—
 “ They have left us an example. Let the minister of a populous district, using careful discrimination of character, select such as ‘are worthy,’ and of ‘good report,’ and assign them their several employments under his direction : they may lessen his own labour by visiting and examining the schools, by reading and praying with the infirm and aged, by consoling the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and pursuing the many nameless ways by which it is in the power of one Christian to benefit and relieve another. Such charity, even more than any other charity, is useful to the giver as well as to the receiver : it occupies minds, which, for want of engagement, might otherwise prey upon themselves : and it occupies them in a way which better fits them for eternity : in religion, as in worldly matters, we often learn our best lessons by teaching. What image more exemplifying the reality of pastoral

care, what more truly Christian picture can be presented to our contemplation, than that of a minister uniting with himself the best disposed and the most competent portion of his parishioners, and superintending counsels, and directing plans which have God for their object, and the eternal welfare of his people for their end; seizing every opportunity of general and individual good, correcting mischiefs at their first rising, providing for the spiritual wants of every different age and class, and thus striving, as far as may be allowed, to ‘present every man perfect in Christ Jesus?’”—“Nor is this any visionary notion; pleasing in idea, but impracticable in reality. Numerous parishes, of different degrees of population, have been brought under such discipline with more or less success. And I feel convinced that whoever is anxious to promote the glory of God, to assist the most important interests of his fellow-creatures, to confirm the security of his country, or maintain the stability of his Church, can ensure none of those great objects more effectively than by means like these. Without them, in some of our crowded districts of dense and extended population, the Church is lost sight of, parochial distinctions are obliterated, and the reciprocal charities and duties of the pastor and the flock are forgotten by the people, because it is physically impossible that they should be satisfactorily discharged.”

The awful visitation which has fallen upon the country renders such societies at this time of increased value and importance. They are calculated powerfully to assist the labours of the Clergy in endeavouring to improve, to the religious advantage of their flocks, the apprehension which is so general. Seasons of alarm and affliction are often peculiarly favourable for the reception of Christian instruction : “ the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ;” and when men look around them and see or hear of death under its most terrible forms, and discover the insufficiency of human means to prevent or remedy the evil they dread, they may “ fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell ¹ ;” and thus be led to flee to Him who is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him ². Immense might be the benefit, which would, through the blessing of God on their labours, accrue to the cause of religion, if parochial visiting associations were established generally throughout the kingdom, under the direction of the Clergy. They might form channels through which the valuable tracts against vice and infidelity, which the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge is now circulating, might be more widely distributed ; through which short addresses, and strong appeals to the conscience, and earnest calls to repentance, in

¹ Matt. x. 28.

² Heb. vii. 25.

direct reference to the pestilence, might be brought home to every family. They might constitute a medium through which the parochial Clergy might communicate with every part of the most populous and extensive parishes regularly and frequently ; through which they might diffuse much bounty, kindness, instruction, and exhortation to their poor and ignorant parishioners. It is impossible not to see at once that such associations might be so framed as to be productive of the most extensive and beneficial results to the Church and people of England ; they are calculated to restore the influence of the Clergy, and extend their sphere of usefulness amongst their flocks. Notwithstanding all the arts of the enemies of our Establishment, the people of England always have loved, and still love their Church : wherever a contrary feeling subsists, it may be always traced to a local or temporary cause ; but still it must be admitted, that the immense population of some parishes, under existing circumstances, is likely to produce estrangement from the appointed pastor ; an evil, which the visiting societies are admirably adapted to remedy. Some may object to such associations as being likely to encroach upon the separate and peculiar duties of the ministerial character : such would be an evil of the most serious nature, for no one must presume to intrude himself uncalled upon the priest's office : but, though it is true every good is capable

of abuse, this is an abuse which may be always especially guarded against by the clergyman who selects and controls the visitors, receives their reports, and superintends their operations : whilst as a further security against the perversion of such associations to party or sectarian views, it might be made a standing rule, that no tract should be circulated in any parish, which had not received the sanction of the incumbent or his curate. To arrange the machinery and frame the laws of a general system of parochial visiting societies, must be a work of time ; but experience has already proved that they may be so framed and conducted as to be productive of great and unmixed advantage. And never could such aid come more opportunely than at the present time : we have already seen the number, fierceness, and malignity of the enemies, who beleaguer our Zion, “and cry, down with her, down with her, even to the ground.” The assistance of the laity, who are faithfully attached and devoted to the cause of true religion, will, therefore, be invaluable, at such a time, in defeating the designs of those who seek to alienate the minds of the flock from their regular pastors, to corrupt their principles, and make them ready instruments for the execution of their deep and wicked schemes : nor will the co-operation of pious laymen, with the clergy, in using every means to bring the great bulk of the people to humble them-

selves before God, in the day of their visitation, be a less important service. The Christian minister resembles a beacon on a dangerous coast, which warns against sand-banks, sunken rocks, and precipitous shores : in fair weather, its single bright and steady light, which, shining through the darkness, guides in safety the passing vessels, is alone sufficient ; but when the tempest rages, when fogs obscure its brightness, when some vessels, having struck on sunken rocks, are foundering ; when others have grounded on sand-banks, and others are stranded amid—

“ The impervious horrors of a lee-ward shore ; ”

then other, and most prompt assistance, is required ; signal guns are to be fired, the life-boat launched, and the various life-preserving apparatus prepared. God has seen fit to cast our lot on troublesome times ; the storms of passion howl around our Church, and her light cannot penetrate the mists of prejudice : the barks of thousands, therefore, committed to the stormy ocean of life,—

“ Youth at the helm, and Pleasure at the prow,”

are in danger of striking on the sunken rocks of secret doubts, or of being wrecked on the exposed and rugged shore of dark despairing infidelity : gladly, therefore, will “ God’s watchman,” who looks

with alarm and distress from his watch-tower, on this scene of imminent danger, avail himself of the friendly hand which offers to aid him in affording rescue from the impending destruction. Oh ! to the ministers of the Gospel,—who feel how much the value and responsibility of their sacred office is increased in times like the present ; who are almost overwhelmed by a sense of what is required of them as “overseers over God’s heritage,” as “watchmen in Israel,” as “ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,”—assistance from pious, zealous, and discreet laymen, acting under their direction, must be peculiarly valuable and acceptable. Oh ! only those who “have always in remembrance into how high a dignity and to how weighty an office and charge they have been called, to teach and to premonish, to feed and to provide for the Lord’s family ; to seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this naughty world that they may be saved through Christ for ever¹,” can fully estimate the value of any aid, however feeble, which comes to them at a time, when maligned and vilified, they find the difficulty of a due discharge of their sacred duties immensely increased by the impediments thrown in their way by the enemies of the Gospel.

¹ Ordination Service.

Perhaps there never was a time which more than the present required zeal blended with discretion, firmness tempered with meekness, and faithfulness softened by charity, in the Christian minister : well does the admonition of our blessed Lord to his disciples apply to those whom, in this day, he has called to be pastors under Himself—" be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." There are two other passages of Scripture which appear to present a striking view of an important duty of the clerical office in times like the present, and of the mode in which it is to be exercised : the command addressed to Isaiah, " Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins ¹." And the instructions given by St. Paul to Timothy, " The servant of the Lord must not strive ; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves ; if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth ²." It is the duty of Christian ministers to exhort and console each other in the difficult work they have to perform ; " to put one another always in remembrance ;" to " bear one another's burdens ;" to " admonish one another in the spirit of meekness and brotherly love." How high is the dignity of the ministerial office ! " Let

¹ Isaiah lviii. 1.

² 2 Tim. ii. 24.

a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God ¹.” “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled unto God ².” How awful its responsibility! “Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore, hear the word of my mouth, and give them warning from me: when I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand ³.” “Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood ⁴.” How great the satisfaction, how sweet the joys of a successful ministry! “For what is our hope or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy ⁵.” “Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord: for what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy,

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 1.

² 2 Cor. v. 20.

³ Ezek. iii. 17.

⁴ Acts xx. 28.

⁵ 1 Thess. ii. 19.

wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God ¹ ?” “Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved ².” “Holding forth the word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain ³.” And how rich its reward ! “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins ⁴.” “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever ⁵.” Many distinguished bishops and pastors, who have shone as bright lights in our church, have strongly recommended that every clergyman should have his appointed seasons in which he “communes with his own heart, and in his chamber, and is still ;” meditates deeply upon his important, responsible, and sacred office ; reads, studies, and prays over the ordination service ; and diligently, strictly, and impartially examines into how far he has been, through Divine grace, enabled to keep his ordination vows—to perform his ordination obligations. Such a practice is of such manifest propriety and use, that doubtless it prevails extensively : and high, indeed, is the standard

¹ 1 Thess. iii. 7.

² Phil. iv. 1.

³ Ibid. iii. 1.

⁴ James v. 20.

⁵ Dan. xii. 3.

of duty, and strict the requirements of service, which our Church imposes upon every minister: "See that you never cease your labour, your care, and diligence, until ye have done all that lieth in you to bring all such as are committed to your charge unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left for error in religion, or for viciousness of life ¹."

The prophet Isaiah thus prays to the Lord: "Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee. With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me, will I seek Thee early; FOR WHEN THY JUDGMENTS ARE IN THE EARTH, THE INHABITANTS OF THE WORLD WILL LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS ²." How "instant in season, and out of season," must all the ministers of the Gospel be, that through the blessing of God, they may make the Divine visitation, which has fallen on the land, conducive to the religious improvement of their several flocks. The very fear of the consequences of intemperance, as being considered to predispose the system towards this dreadful disease, has, in many places, operated to the production of a great external reformation of the habits of life; let then

¹ Ordination Service.

² Isaiah xxvi. 8, 9.

the favourable moment be seized, and every means used, that the inner man may be converted to God. It is not sufficient, that the pestilence should be considered as a judgment, and thus made the occasion of private and public exhortation; the press should teem with tracts on this most important and engrossing subject; and there should be diffused throughout the country, under every form, and adapted to every rank in life, admonition and entreaty for all to improve to their soul's health the spread of a pestilence, which so often destroys the body which it attacks. Every clergyman has his own sphere of influence within which, at least, his labours may be beneficially exercised; and if, by publishing, he benefits only those who are principally dependent on him for religious instruction, he should consider himself well repaid:—but who know how far they may be instruments in God's hands for good to their fellow men? The Almighty often selects feeble agents to accomplish great results, that it may be seen, that “neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase¹.” And oh! what a source of joy there is to the true believer in hoping he may be an humble instrument in God's hands of “winning souls to Christ.” The excellent Doddridge, in the preface to his “Rise and Progress of

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 7.

Religion in the Soul," says, he should consider his labour far more than amply compensated, if his work, through the Divine blessing, be made instrumental to the conversion of *one sinner*. What a field is now opened to the ministers of the Gospel, in which they may hope, through God's grace and blessing, "*to turn many to righteousness*;" for in times of great national apprehension and danger the cause of true religion often advances and flourishes. And oh ! how sweet in such seasons, how doubly blessed—blessed both to those who minister, and to those who are ministered unto—is the faithful and zealous discharge of the duties of their high and holy calling, who are commissioned to pour the balm of consolation on the wounded spirit, to bind up the broken-hearted, to sooth the terrors of affrighted conscience, and to lead the humble, and contrite, and heavy-laden, to the Saviour, that they may take His yoke upon them, and find rest unto their souls.

Archbishop Leighton, the bright ornament of Scottish Episcopacy, has forcibly stated the nature and obligations of the Christian ministry, in commenting upon that most instructive passage in the First general Epistle of St. Peter, "Feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to

the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away¹." "The duty enjoined," writes the Archbishop, "is, *Feed the flock of God*. Every step of the way of our salvation hath on it the print of infinite majesty, wisdom, and goodness; and this among the rest, that men, sinful, weak men, are made subservient in that great work of bringing Christ and souls to meet; that by the foolishness of preaching (or what appears so to carnal wisdom), the chosen of God are called, and come unto Jesus, and are made *wise unto salvation*; and that the life which is conveyed to them by the *word of life*, in the hands of poor men, is by the same means preserved and advanced. And this is the standing work of the ministry, and this the thing here bound upon them that are employed in it, *to feed the flock of God that is among them*. Jesus Christ descended to purchase a Church, and ascended to provide and furnish it, to send down his Spirit: *He ascended, and gave gifts*, particularly *for the work of the ministry*, and the great use of them is, *to feed the flock of God*."

"Not to say any more of this usual resemblance of a flock, importing the weakness and tenderness of the Church, the continual need she stands in of inspection, and guidance, and defence, and the

¹ 1 Pet. v. 2.

tender care of the Chief Shepherd for these things ; the phrase enforces the present duty of subordinate pastors ; their care and diligence in feeding of that flock. The due rule of discipline not excluded, the main part of feeding is by doctrine, leading them into the wholesome and *green pastures* of saving truths, revealed in the Gospel, accommodating the way of teaching to their condition and capacity ; to be, as much as may be, particularly acquainted with it, and suit diligently and prudently their doctrine to it ; to *feed the sheep*, those more advanced ; to *feed the lambs*, the younger and weaker ; to have special care of the infirm ; to learn of their Master the Great Shepherd, to *bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which is sick*¹, those that are broken in spirit, that are exercised with temptations, and *gently to lead those that are with young*², in whom the inward work of grace is as in the conception, and they heavy and weak with the weight of it, and the many difficulties and doubt-ings, which are frequent companions and symptoms of that work. Oh ! what dexterity and skilfulness, what diligence, and above all, what affection, and bowels of compassion, are needful for this task ! *Who is sufficient for these things*³ ? Who would not faint, and give over in it, were not our Lord the *Chief Shepherd* ; were not all our sufficiency laid up

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 16.² Isaiah xl. 11.³ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

in His rich fulness, and all our insufficiency covered in His gracious acceptance ¹ ?” Animated by a high sense of duty, and enlightened, strengthened, and guided by an abundant outpouring of Divine grace, may all the “pastors and teachers,” who have been ordained, “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ;” “Preach the word, be instant in season and out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine ;” “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ : that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive : but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ : from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.” God grant that none of His servants may faint or grow weary under the increased weight of duty laid upon them by the circumstances of the times ! May they all labour, and “pray without

¹ Commentary upon the 1st Epistle of St. Peter, p. 280.

ceasing for the church and people of God,—remembering that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much!” When faithful to their great Master, they have high encouragements to excite, holy consolations to cheer, and heavenly aid to direct and bless their unremitting exertions in His service, whose weak and “unprofitable,” but still faithful and attached “servants” they are. Let not any such fear but that they will obtain a blessing on their labours, an answer to their prayers, from that gracious Being whose ministers they are, and the advancement of whose kingdom they seek. Never did the Lord fail his servants ; His “exceeding great and precious promises” are all sure and steadfast, are all “yea and in him, Amen.” “For He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee ; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me¹.” He hath said, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, Amen².” May each individual pastor of the Church of Christ have grace to receive and act upon, as addressed to himself, the concluding admonition of St. Paul to Timothy : “Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry :” then “The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory³.” And

¹ Heb. xiii. 5.² Matt. xxviii. 20.³ Isaiah lx. 19.

when the time of his earthly stewardship is on the eve of completion,—the period of his allotted ministry about to expire, then he may hope that upon his last hours will be poured some portion of the joyful testimony of an approving conscience ; some measure of that blessed assurance of confirmed faith, which cheered and supported the dying Hooker ; “ I plead not my righteousness, but the forgiveness of my unrighteousness through His merits who died to purchase pardon for penitent sinners. Let not mine, O Lord, but Thy will be done ! God hath heard my daily petitions ; for I am at peace with all men, and He is at peace with me. From such blessed assurance, I feel that inward joy which this world can neither give nor take from me. My conscience beareth me this witness ; and this witness makes the thoughts of death joyful.” Then he may hope that the approach of the dark shadows of death will be illumined by some beams of that light from above, which, with the full blaze of triumphant faith, shed a holy flood of radiance and glory over the close of the ministry of the great Apostle of the Gentiles : “ I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge,

shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but to all those who love his appearing¹."

Let the laity also be reminded of what they owe to God and society at this eventful time. There are various modes by which they can advance the cause of religion. The value of their services in co-operation with the Clergy in forming visiting societies, has been already stated. But as their situation and engagements in life preclude many from taking an active part in any work of Christian charity, it must be a high satisfaction to them who are humble disciples of that blessed Lord, "who went about doing good²," to have an opportunity of endeavouring at once to follow His example, and obey His commands, by means of public societies and institutions. The best interests of man would be much promoted, if the noble, and great, and affluent in the land, who fear God, would make a more decided demonstration of their sentiments ; and give the full weight of their rank and influence, and contribute liberally, to the support of societies, the object of which is the advancement of true religion. In such times as the present, it is awful to witness the apathy, supineness, and indifference in the cause of the Lord, which prevail so extensively in the world, amongst those who profess themselves to be His servants.

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 6.

² Acts x. 38.

But disregard for the spiritual wants of others, at all times highly sinful, is doubly so now; and unwillingness, through fear of ridicule or misconstruction, to manifest a warm zeal for the honour of the Lord and a decided devotion to His cause—at all times a wretched weakness—must, when His enemies are active and powerful, be peculiarly offensive to Him, who has said, “Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels¹.” Let, therefore, all lukewarm professors of religion be addressed in the words of Joshua, “If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose this day whom ye will serve² :” let them be warned in the words of the Saviour, “He that is not with me, is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad³.”

It is the high and peculiar distinction of our country, that we have not only charitable institutions for the prevention and cure of many of the physical evils, and for the relief and solace of many of the moral evils of life; but we have societies for the supply of the religious wants of our home population, of our colonies, and of the whole family of man, wherever British commerce, and, with it,

¹ Mark viii. 38.

² Josh. xxiv. 15.

³ Matt. xii. 30.

British influence, extend. This is not the place to enter upon the subject of all these societies ; their bare enumeration, with the most brief statement of their several objects, would fill many pages ; perhaps, therefore, to particularize any, where all have merit, may be deemed unjust towards others ; but every consistent member of the Church of England is bound strenuously to support, and every clergyman zealously to advocate, societies, whose professed object is the inculcation of doctrines which he firmly believes, the use of a ritual which he fondly loves, the observance of ordinances which he highly values and reverences. Of these it may be right to make some brief notice, not only because some of them have not received that encouragement and support to which their importance entitles them, but because they are peculiarly calculated to remedy the existence, and to prevent the recurrence, of many of the evils which at present endanger our civil and religious institutions. First in order stands the National Society for promoting the education of the poor in the principles of the Established Church. Then, ascending to a higher grade in society, we have an institution, King's College and School, to supply the youth of the middle classes, in the metropolis, with a liberal education, founded on the basis of religious knowledge. This institution is only in its infancy, but if properly supported, it might extend its ramifica-

tions throughout the kingdom, diffusing every where the beneficial fruit of true religion, sound learning, and useful knowledge. It is much to be wished that similar colleges and schools, in connexion with King's College, were established in all our great towns, in like manner as schools every where throughout the kingdom have sprung from that prolific parent, with which they are in union, the Central School in Baldwin's Gardens. Our National Schools are well calculated early to train children in the path of godliness ; to accustom them to habits of cleanliness, neatness, and order ; to excite them to industry and application, to habituate them to proper restraint and discipline, to supply them with the knowledge suitable to their station in life ; and, above all, to impress deeply the mind with the great truths of the Gospel, and to store it richly with passages of Scripture, which, once thoroughly learnt, are rarely forgotten, but may, in after life, prove in the hour of temptation a safeguard, and in seasons of sickness or of sorrow, a sweet and never-failing solace. If the minds of our manufacturing and agricultural population had been fortified with the principles which are now instilled in these schools, into the children of the poor, the success of the teachers of infidelity and sedition would have been far different from what it has unfortunately proved. The system of instruction adopted in King's College

is precisely the one which has been recommended as alone affording any security that education will be rendered conducive to the advancement of the best, the eternal interests of man. Every facility is afforded for the acquisition of knowledge, but the relative importance of its several departments is steadily kept in view, and the balance of studies is carefully adjusted, that, if possible, none may be pursued to the neglect of others, but all receiving their due degree of attention, religion and morals, literature and science, may occupy their proper place in the plan of education. This institution, through the Divine blessing, may be of great value in checking the progress of unsettled and unsound opinions amongst a class of men which are daily becoming more influential in society ; whilst there will be also a better safeguard for the future, in the foundation of sound religious principles, which is designed to be laid ; and which should ever be a primary object, for not only is the prevention easier than the cure, but the poison may spread where the antidote is never, or fruitlessly, applied. If we view then in connexion, our Infant, National, and Sunday Schools, in full operation ; King's College adapted to branch into similar institutions in our great towns ; and our old-established Grammar Schools and Universities continuing to flourish ; we shall see that these are calculated to form one vast chain,

which, in its concatenation, would unite the great bulk of the population of the country with the established Church.

Nor is the attention of the Church confined to the education of the youth of her communion. She has a Society also to afford the poor adequate accommodation when attending religious worship, of which, in some places, the great proportion of them were long deprived, from the increase of population, and want of free seats, in the parish churches. Parliament, with proper liberality, has at different times placed certain sums at the disposal of Commissioners; to assist in remedying this great evil, which has inflicted the severest injury on the moral and religious character of the lower classes in England. Much has, therefore, been done, but still more remains to be done; and though perhaps the least regarded, still the Society for building and enlarging churches is of great importance to the interests of religion, and therefore well deserving of the support of the friends of the Establishment. The valuable and venerable Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge completes the work of Christian charity and instruction, by accompanying, as it were, the poor man to his home, supplying, either gratuitously or at very reduced prices, the Holy Scriptures, the book of common prayer, and tracts and works designed to correct erroneous opinions and immoral habits, and to promote soundness of faith

and holiness of life. Nor is this the utmost limit of the Society's labours among our home population : parochial lending libraries have been also established by it ; that in every parish where the desire of knowledge has been called forth by the national schools, works which combine amusement with instruction—works which inform the head and improve the heart—may be accessible, free of all cost to the poor man, in his hour of leisure. It is thus these two most valuable Societies, acting in co-operation, aid in the due and effective discharge of their important duties the parochial clergy, who are thereby enabled to diffuse amongst the indigent and ignorant of their several parishes—to a degree far beyond what the exertions of individuals, however pious and wealthy, are likely to effect—the blessings of Christian education and Christian knowledge. Great are the claims, therefore, of these societies upon the members of the Church of England, for their support, that all of her communion may be educated, nourished, and preserved in those principles of saving faith and holy obedience, which, drawn directly from Scripture, are summed up in the articles, embodied in the liturgy, and explained in the homilies of our pure and reformed branch of the church of Christ.

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge extends her operations beyond our home population : in co-operation with the Society for the Pro-

pagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, it has laboured most diligently and with very encouraging success, in the wide and waste field of our numerous colonies. Missionaries, catechists, and schoolmasters, are sent into every land where we have possessions ; and congregations have been formed and churches built where the glad tidings of the Gospel had never before been heard. But, however cheering what has been done and is doing for the spread of Christianity may be, the painful confession must be made that this country has never yet, in any adequate degree, discharged the religious obligations she owes her colonies¹. The sceptre of Great Britain rules over one hundred millions who are said to be ignorant of the Gospel. Great and splendid have been the instances of individual liberality, but as a nation we have not made those strenuous exertions, those sacrifices which duty requires : we have been unmindful of the heavy debt of gratitude and service which we owe to the Ruler of nations. Why are we to suppose that Divine Providence has bestowed upon us such a vast colonial empire ? Not to swell the pomp and

¹ Barbadoes has, at this time, most urgent claims upon the British nation for assistance : it is estimated that the injury sustained by churches, schools, and the buildings of charitable institutions, during the late hurricane, cannot be repaired under a less cost than 40,000*l*. A subscription has been opened in London for rebuilding the churches and school-houses.

increase the power and wealth of a little island, which has been proudly styled,

“ The Island, Empress of the Sea :”

but that we may be instruments in the hands of the Great and Gracious Lord of the whole human race in benefiting mankind. And how can we best accomplish this great end? A Christian nation should make it an object of paramount importance to diffuse the light of that Gospel, in which it has itself for ages rejoiced as the best gift, the holiest privilege, it enjoys at the hands of God. Has then this Christian nation so acted? Alas! there is one circumstance, which painfully occupies at this moment the attention of the friends of Christianity, here and in India, which may suffice to answer in the negative. Bishop after bishop has been allowed to go forth, with the spirit of a martyr, and to meet a martyr's death in India, where the diocese is admitted by all to be so extensive, that the strongest constitution must, from the effects of the climate, sink under even an imperfect discharge of the overwhelming load of duty. And yet repeated applications for the appointment of bishops to the several presidencies, by which the cause of religion amongst the Christian, and the spread of the Gospel amongst the Heathen population, would be very greatly advanced, have been up to this time refused, it is much to be feared, from an unwillingness to incur

the expense of further episcopal appointments. May Bishop Turner be the last, who, humanly speaking, is to be thus sacrificed! For it would inflict a heavy load of sin upon a Christian people to be not only lavish of life, of talents, and of piety, but to prefer to the cause of God, who has so abundantly blessed us, an economy, which, however wise and proper when rightly practised, becomes miserable and wicked when allowed to operate to the hinderance of the Gospel. An appeal is never made in vain to the good feelings of the people of England, and the present is an occasion, on which all who value not merely the cause of religion, but of humanity, should make a declaration of their opinions; and come forward liberally to the support of Societies whose object is so important and praiseworthy, and whose means are so inadequate to several claims upon them. The reports of the Societies for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, for the year 1831, cannot be too strongly recommended to the attention of the public. The comparatively small support which the latter receives from annual subscription must be mainly ascribed to the nature and extent of its labours being so little known; for it is not the character of the English people to allow a valuable Society to languish from want of funds. And yet, during the past year, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts must have

suspended in some places the great work it is carrying on, if it had not allowed its expenditure to exceed greatly its receipts. Such is the sad truth we learn from the report now before the public, which pleads the cause of Christianity in distant lands, so powerfully, and yet so meekly, that it cannot fail to awaken sympathy in every religious breast, and call forth assistance from every liberal hand. "According to its power, yea, and beyond its power," it has opened the hand of Christian bounty in answer to the numerous and pressing calls that have been made upon it : and the consequence has been that the means of meeting such calls have become every year more insufficient. Even on the supposition (a supposition, however, which benevolence will not allow to be entertained for a moment), that all new applications for its assistance are to be disregarded, the Society will require an addition of at least 10,000*l.* to its yearly income for the fulfilment of engagements into which it has entered. Its deficiencies for many years have been supplied by large reductions of its capital. The single fact that it has been compelled to sell nearly 70,000*l.* stock must fill its friends with serious uneasiness. For unless its funds are very largely increased, it is manifest that they must soon be exhausted. But, surely, so sad a result can never be allowed ! There is too much benevolence in the Christian public of this favoured nation, to permit the abandonment of so great a work as that by which the light of the

Gospel, in its purity, is communicated to the benighted nations of the East. Who among us will be wanting, in most earnest efforts, to save our brethren in the colonies from so sad an injury as the loss of that religious instruction, and those means of grace which are to be regarded as their birthright? Who will allow the many excellent men who have left their native country as missionaries, with the purest zeal, and the most earnest desire to promote the spiritual welfare of their fellow-creatures, through incessant toil in distant lands, to be deprived of the moderate but necessary support, that has hitherto been afforded by this Society? Who will allow the no less valuable persons, who have been diligently trained in the colonies, almost from their cradles, to carry forward the same Christian designs, as missionaries, and catechists, and school-masters, to be now cast upon the world, and exposed to all the miseries of want?

“What shall be said, if it fail of attaining its full measure of good, through the indifference of those whom God has not only ‘blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ,’ but to whom He has also largely afforded the temporal means of imparting those blessings to others? What shall be said if they, who by the abundant mercy of God are themselves supplied with the bread of life, suffer their fellow-creatures, whose necessities are plainly pointed out to them, to perish with hunger? Your committee will not contemplate the possibility of

such a deplorable case as this. Grateful for the support which the Society has already received, and through which it has been enabled to effect so much, they will not allow themselves to doubt, but that Providence will now, and from time to time, raise it up friends who will furnish it with more ample and effectual means for the continuance and extension of its 'labours of love.'"

Every friend of religion must earnestly pray that a hope so humbly and devoutly expressed may be fulfilled, and that the Lord may bless and prosper these Societies, in sowing the good seed of the word, in a field of immense extent, and, in many parts, of the most unpromising barrenness. For they embrace—to particularize only the most important missions—the widely dispersed population of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Canadas; the numerous islands of the West Indies; the great Peninsula of India; and the various settlements in Australia. And it is gratifying and highly satisfactory to be able to quote the impartial testimony of a distinguished individual, the late Governor of Nova Scotia, to their efficiency and value: "In countries in which I have resided, and which I have visited—in remote and almost desert places, I have witnessed the blessings and comforts of our holy religion, dispensed, by your servants, to persons who otherwise might pass from the cradle to the grave, without the blessings or benefits, the comforts or the consolations of any appropriate holy office, to

sanctify their entrance into life, to receive them into the Christian family, to solemnize those connexions, on the proper observance of which the moral constitution of society essentially depends, and finally to perform the last sad offices over departed humanity. In my own person—in my own family—in visitations the most awful—in severe domestic affliction, I have partaken of those blessings and consolations, administered by your servants.” Let, therefore, the parliament and people of the United Kingdom contribute liberally, not merely towards the continuance, but the extension, of the important labours of a Society, whose only fault has been,—if it be a fault,—that it has so shrunk from any appearance of obtruding its wants, that it has not sufficiently made known its claims upon the friends of religion; who must be at once desirous that our countrymen in our distant dependencies should not be debarred from the exercise of religious worship; and that the light of the Gospel may be shed upon those, who, though living under the government of Great Britain, are lying in darkness and the shadow of death. And if there be any whose hearts expand not with that diffusive spirit of Christian philanthropy, which ardently desires to promote the spiritual welfare of the whole human race; let them at least be sensible to the religious wants, and alive to the religious improvement of their countrymen, who are established in some of the numerous colonies of this vast empire. In this great commercial

country, in which the spirit of enterprise or the calls of duty lead so many forth often at an early age into distant lands, there must be an immense number of influential persons, who have a direct interest in this provision for the religious instruction of the residents in our several dependencies. And oh ! how consolatory must it prove to the heart of a parent, or even of a friend, who sends forth a youth to seek his fortune far from friends, kindred, and home, to know that he will not be deprived of the public exercise of those religious duties in which he has been early trained. Oh ! how immeasurably would the pain of separation, which may be for life—which may be for ever—be increased, if there was a melancholy certainty, that at the most dangerous period of life, when the passions are strong, the judgment weak, and the principles often unsettled ; and where the temptations to sensual indulgences abound, and the restraints of parental authority are removed ; there was no religious monitor, no duly ordained pastor, to instruct in health, to cheer in sorrow, to strengthen in sickness, and, it may be, to support and console in death, those who are pursuing an useful and honourable course far from their dearest earthly ties, far from what is ever dear to the heart of all—their native land—the land of their fathers.

In entering thus more at length on the subject of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts than on any other Society, an excep-

tion has been made in its favour, because it has never yet received that encouragement and support to which its most important object and valuable labours so well entitle it: but imperfect as the notice of other Societies has been, it would be still more so if concluded without any mention of the Church Missionary Society, and the British and Foreign Bible Society. The first of these is formed with the design of endeavouring to obey to the fullest extent the parting command of our blessed Lord, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature ¹:" it is not confined by any limits, but wherever the opening presents itself, thither the indefatigable, zealous, and faithful missionary is sent: and the Lord has greatly prospered their labours. The latter, whether we regard its scope or its machinery, is a mighty and wonderful engine, capable of producing immense benefit to the whole human race: its scope is not merely the supply of the inhabitants of the British dominions with the Scriptures, but their translation into every language, their dissemination in every land; and its vast and complicated machinery has been put into operation in every quarter of the globe. It may suffice to state, that the grand, the beneficent, and most Christian end, which these two Societies have in view, is to evangelize the world: the one sends its

¹ Mark xvi. 15.

missionary either instructed, or to be instructed, in the language of the country where is to be his field in which he is to sow the good seed of the word of life ; and the other supplies the sower with that seed of the word of life translated into the language of the country. The difficulties they have to encounter are immense ; and the danger of the neglect of the legitimate object, or of perversion of the power and means of these Societies, may be considerable ; but still the enterprise of Christian love is not to be abandoned, because it is difficult ; nor the means of Christian usefulness sacrificed, because they are capable of abuse : rather let those who rejoice in the light of the Gospel, and thank God every day of their lives for having the high privilege of reading His Book, labour to provide missionaries so well fitted for their office, as to afford reasonable hope that through Him, on whose assistance and blessing they alone depend, they may surmount the many and arduous difficulties which impede their progress : rather let them exercise increased vigilance, and employ greater care and attention, that if any error exist, it may be corrected, that if any abuse has crept in, it may be reformed. Let these Societies be only faithful to their trust—true to the one great object they are ever to keep in view, and they may fully rely upon Him, whose kingdom they labour to advance, whose word they seek to publish—to bless their work and

ensure their success. But let them remember that no unsound principles of expediency, no unworthy means to excite popularity, or to gain support, must be had recourse to ; such would be to apply to their goodly edifices the “untempered mortar,” which would end in their destruction : let them go forth in the strength of the Lord, and in his strength only ; let them seek the extension of Christ’s kingdom, and of His kingdom only ; and then all who love the Lord’s Christ, honour His name, and seek to promote His glory—if they can do no more, will at least say, we “bid you God speed.”

The increasing exertions which are making, in this country, for the diffusion of vital religion amongst Christians, and for the spread of the Gospel amongst the heathen, will form one of the brightest pages in its history. And truly at this moment it presents almost the only subject on which the Christian’s anxious eye can rest with unmixed satisfaction and with joyful hope. The prospect around is in many parts dark and discouraging, but in one direction is illumined by a bright and holy light—“the sun of righteousness arising with healing in his wings,” upon the “nations which sit in darkness and the shadow of death¹.” England appears to be selected by God for this great and glorious work. As the Roman

¹ Mal. iv. 2.

Empire was raised up and employed by the Great Governor of the Universe for the first promulgation of the Gospel ; and as the Greek language was made the medium through which that Gospel was extensively diffused : so we may hope that the British Empire, so greatly increased, may be employed, and the English language, so widely spread, be made a medium, for that final promulgation which is to take place, and the result of which is to be thus complete—"the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea¹." But however this may be—for ill does it become short-sighted man to speculate on the unfulfilled prophecies of Holy Writ—our line of duty is plain : we must make the most strenuous exertions, trusting to be instruments in the hands of the Almighty in the conversion of the heathen. The labour of love, which springs from gratitude to God, which is directed by faith in His promises and animated by hope of His blessing, will never be fruitless : if it please not the Divine Providence to give it a prosperous issue to those for whose benefit it was designed, it will return as a blessing—"good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over"—into the bosoms of those, who planned, supported, and conducted it, with a sole view to God's glory and the salvation of

¹ Isaiah xi. 9.

men. This physical pestilence has travelled from India to England: does it not in awful terms reproach us, for having, as a nation, done so little to arrest and heal the moral pestilence which rages throughout that great Peninsula? Oh! let every means be used by the friends of religion to rouse a sinful people to a due sense of what they owe to their home population, to their colonies, and to the world at large. Whatever be the channel in which an individual may wish the stream of his bounty to flow, he will find Societies through which he will best accomplish the good he has in view. Let, therefore, all be active, liberal, and zealous, in the cause of religion: let all, according to the ability which God supplieth, endeavour to promote the present and eternal welfare of all mankind! "Charge them," says St. Paul, "who are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate: laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life¹."—"But this I say, he which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. Every man

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound towards you ; that ye always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work ¹.” “ Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity :” let all in their several vocations endeavour to improve, to the spiritual advantage of themselves and others, this Divine visitation ; that thus its great object being accomplished—for the language of God’s chastisements, whether national or individual, is “ be zealous and repent,”—we may humbly hope that our gracious Lord God will be pleased to withdraw His heavy hand from His humbled and contrite people ; the duty of each of whom has been shown to be, to effect, through the Divine blessing, a personal reformation ; for the sins of each individual form fractions of the immense integral of national guilt, which has called down the Divine displeasure ; to employ their rank, influence, and a due proportion of their wealth, in labouring to advance, by their personal exertions, and through the medium of societies, a national reformation ; and to diffuse throughout the world the knowledge of the Saviour, that “ the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ ².”

¹ 2 Cor. ix. 6—8.

² Rev. xi. 15.

And how are they to be addressed who are the enemies of the Lord and of His Christ—who trample under foot his cross, and, at present, stand excluded from all benefit of the great atonement by “counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing”—how are they to be addressed who deny the Lord who bought them, and secretly maintain, or openly espouse, the doctrines of infidelity? In the language of friendly warning and exhortation. Sometimes the Christian advocate has erred by employing a tone of conscious superiority, of cold severity, or of keen satire: the first offends, the second hardens, the third irritates the proud spirit of unbelief: the voice of remonstrance is often listened to, when authority commands in vain. Let, therefore, whatever has been said, in these pages, be considered, not as intended in the least degree to wound or insult the feelings of any one, but as written in the honest and faithful discharge of Christian duty. And in the spirit of meekness and charity let me entreat those, who reject Christianity, to pause, reflect, and examine deeply into the grounds on which they have come to a decision which involves their eternal destiny. Let me ask them whether they have ever duly considered, first, *the possibility of Revelation being true*; and, secondly, *the consequences of Revelation being true*. Surely a creed, which numbers amongst its defenders laymen, who hold the highest place in England’s proud

annals of science and philosophy, is not lightly to be rejected by ordinary minds : surely where Bacon, Milton, Boyle, Locke, and Newton, have been believers, there is room to admit *the possibility* of the creed being true. When intellects of the most powerful grasp, disciplined by the most arduous studies, and stored with the richest fruits of human knowledge, have received with humility, gratitude, reverence, and faith, the Bible, as the inspired Word of God, some doubts may flash across the mind of the infidel, as to whether he has arrived at a just conclusion, in refusing to believe that Bible. And oh ! if there do arise a doubt, let him now be entreated to re-examine this most important subject, on which the interests of eternity depend ; to reconsider the grounds on which he denies a faith in which, during eighteen hundred years, millions have lived and died.

There is, however, a second point of consideration, and that a very important one, which ought not to be lost sight of, *the consequences of Revelation being true*,—the unutterable anguish of hopeless, endless despair and torment. Infidels often speak with much levity, and sometimes with profaneness, of the awful punishments of a future world, denounced in Scripture against impenitent guilt ; but, if they searched deeply into their own hearts, they would find not only that they were less happy than they were before they shook off their

belief in Revelation ; but some might discover, almost, the commencement of the gnawing of the undying worm. In health, this may be scarcely perceived, but when the hour approaches, which generally tears away the mask which has concealed internal feelings long kept secret, the hideousness of infidelity is fully seen. Some appear to have acted their part to the last ; thus Hume was said to have spent some of his latter hours in reading “ the Dialogues of the Dead,” of the Apostate Lucian ; but what an employment for one who professed to be a philosopher ! At a time, when the eyes are about to close for ever on all that the heart has held dear in life, “ drollery, in such circumstances, is neither more nor less than

Moody madness, laughing wild
Amidst severest woe¹.”

But such cases are, generally, of rare occurrence : as the sombre shades of the evening of life gathered around Gibbon, this melancholy confession escaped him,—the past is gone, the present is but for a moment, and the prospect of futurity is dark and doubtful. Paine, who had vauntingly proclaimed, that, during an illness, expected by himself and those around him to be fatal, he had rejoiced that he had published his *Age of Reason*, when the hour of death really arrived, endured all the ago-

¹ Bishop Horne's Letter to Adam Smith.

nies of remorse, evincing a horrible combination of awakened terror and blasphemous despair. And that renowned champion of infidelity, Voltaire, who was smitten, in his hour of pride and triumph, suffered in his last hours such intolerable anguish and such overwhelming terror, that the alarmed physician declared, that the furies of Orestes could not equal the horrors of such a death-bed.

Should the consideration of the possibility and consequences of the truth of Revelation, and of the certainty of the present wretchedness of infidelity, awaken in some readers feelings of apprehension,—lest, whilst in imagination they have been releasing themselves from the trammels of superstition, they have in reality been fastening round their own necks the heavy yoke of that hard task-master, the great enemy of the human race ; let them be entreated to institute now a strict enquiry as to the unanswerableness of the objections against Revelation, on the strength of which they have withheld their belief ; and as to the certainty of those conclusions of unassisted reason, on which they have been content to build their opinions as to an hereafter, unmindful that,

“ Dim as the borrowed beams of moon and stars
To lonely, weary, wandering travellers,
Is reason to the soul.”

Alas ! it is melancholy to think how many reject

Christianity without due examination : but let the infidel be assured that, whether he is involved in the mazy labyrinth of metaphysical subtleties, perplexed with the false conclusions of materialism, startled by the apparent extent of physical and moral evil, or offended, with the multitude of sceptics, at mysteries, creeds, and articles ; he will find answers to all his objections and difficulties in the various treatises which have been written on the evidences of Christianity. But let him not enter upon the subject with a prejudiced mind, in the pride of human reason, or under the influence of human passions. Is it likely that the Great Author of light and life will vouchsafe to illuminate understandings, which prejudice darkens, and pride renders presumptuous ; or convert and sanctify hearts, which sensuality debases and pollutes ? They who approach the Great Governor of the Universe to be instructed, in what belongs to their everlasting peace, must come with humility, reverence, and awe ; they must strive to divest themselves of prepossession, prejudice, and passion ; and pray to be guided unto all truth : and if they persevere in patient and dispassionate examination of the evidences of Christianity, and in an humble and careful study of the Scriptures themselves, accompanied with sincere and earnest prayers, in God's good time, the light of Divine grace will break upon their darkened understandings ; they will see how

wonderfully the conflicting attributes of justice and mercy have been reconciled in the Divine plan for the restoration of a guilty world to the favour of its offended God; they will be filled with devout admiration of that love of God, which passeth all understanding, which has provided for the most heinous offenders a means of escape from eternal condemnation; and they will thankfully and joyfully embrace the offers of salvation through the Saviour, published in the Gospel.

But if there be any who refuse to return to the God of their youth; any who close their ears against every admonition to examine, deeply, into those principles of infidelity, which they have adopted,—principles too dear to man's natural pride, too favourable to his natural corruption, to be willingly or easily resigned—let them at least be persuaded not to attempt to make proselytes to their creed. The time may come when they shall be convinced of the truth of Christianity; and oh! how will the weight of guilt, which, in the sad and dark hour of a late repentance, almost overwhelms the soul, be increased, if they have been instrumental in destroying the belief of others, which they have not the power to restore! There is no crime of so deep a die as the ruin of an immortal soul; none which subjects to the same dreadful remorse; none which presents the same terrible impediment to our obtaining pardon and peace: for what pre-

sent peace can there be to him, who sees one soul exposed to eternal condemnation, through his means? What to him who sees many? What to him, who has the agonising conviction ever present to his mind, that he has no longer the power to attempt to repair the evil he has done, for they have been summoned to judgment, whom he had led astray? There is also another consideration which may have some weight with those who promulgate infidel doctrines, which is, that they blast the present as well as eternal happiness of their miserable converts. "Perhaps our modern sceptics are ignorant, that without the belief of a God and the hope of immortality, the miseries of human life would often be insupportable. Yet this I must suppose, or I must believe them to be the most cruel, the most perfidious, and the most profligate of men." It is most true, that if you rob a man of his religious principles, you deprive him of what "has both the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come," his peace of mind, his trust in God's protection, his faith in the Saviour, his hope of glory, all that consoles, improves, elevates, and ennobles our nature—all are gone, and in their place are substituted lawless passions, disappointed hopes, and bitter regrets. If, therefore, no other consideration will avail to induce the infidel school to forego their plans of proselytism, let regard for their philanthropy, of which they make

such boast, be urged to prevent their rendering men less happy than they are at present, under the mild and benignant rule of Christianity. May that blessed Lord, who “willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, have mercy upon all infidels and heretics, and so fetch them home to His flock, that they may be made one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The duty of a Christian people, under Divine visitations, however feebly, has been faithfully stated, according to the conscientious belief of the writer : may He, in dependence upon whose blessing, and to promote whose kingdom it has been written, make it instrumental to the production of a religious improvement of the afflictive dispensation sent upon the land. The nature of the disease has ceased to be doubtful, and the pestilence which has been so long advancing towards us is admitted now by all to have reached our shores. Once more, then, let the question be asked, “What will ye do in the day of visitation when your desolation shall come from far, to whom will ye flee for help ?” Oh that one simultaneous cry would respond from the inhabitants of this kingdom—“WE WILL TRUST IN THE LORD FOR EVER, FOR IN THE LORD JEHOVAH IS EVERLASTING STRENGTH !” When Solomon, on the dedication of the temple, prayed, “If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, or whatso-

ever sickness there be : then what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man or by all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sin, and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house; then hear Thou in heaven, Thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and render to every man according unto all his ways, whose heart Thou knowest, for Thou only knowest the hearts of all men¹." The Lord returned the gracious answer: "I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people : if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land²."

Prayers, set forth by authority, are offered up to the throne of grace, throughout the kingdom, and it has pleased the Almighty to deal graciously with His people, in mitigating the virulence of the pestilence : let a fast be proclaimed, that on an appointed day the whole nation may "humble themselves, and pray, and seek the Lord's face:" let associations be formed to assist the ministers of God's Word and Sacraments, to exhort and entreat the

¹ 2 Chron. vi. 28.

² Ibid. vii. 12.

people to "turn from their wicked ways:" and if "the Lord's people, which are called by His name," humbled and contrite turn unto Him, with all their hearts, and with mourning and fasting, and cry, "Spare us, O Lord, spare Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood; turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine anger towards us to cease;" "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and just are Thy judgments:" if they "cease to do evil, and learn to do well," then in God's good time the gracious promise will be fulfilled, for "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,"—**I WILL HEAR FROM HEAVEN, AND WILL FORGIVE THEIR SIN, AND WILL HEAL THEIR LAND.**

Oh may it not be, that the wickedness of the land shall avert from it the mercy and blessing of the Most High! May it not be, that the fearful words shall become applicable to us, "Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not!" Oh! rather may "the spirit of grace and supplications" be poured upon the people, for "Will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for Him." Then shall the Lord's people derive joy and peace from those transporting words of comfort: "For a

small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord Thy Redeemer."

"God's judgments are in the earth." In many places there has been a literal fulfilment of those terrible predictions, the application of which is not to be considered limited to any time or nation: "All joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone: in the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction¹." Truly in our case it may be said, "the isles saw it and feared, the ends of the earth were afraid²." Oh! without experiencing the extreme severity of the scourge, may this nation learn the lesson it is meant to teach! "They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord; even the name of the Lord God of Israel, in the isles of the sea." "Trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." Proclaim every where "God is our hope and strength," a "sure refuge in the day of trouble." "Then shall the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." Then shall they know that "the Lord is a very present help in trouble; blessed are

¹ Isaiah xxiv. 11.

² Ibid. xli. 5.

the people whose trust is in Him." Then, God grant that it may be said of this land, long favoured and blest of heaven, thou "hast glorified God in the day of visitation¹;" therefore, thou shalt "obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away²." "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee, the glory of the Lord shall be thy re-reward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, **HERE I AM**³."

May God, whose gracious and never-failing Providence orders all things both in heaven and earth, of His infinite mercy, accomplish this great end of all His visitations, that we may become a "righteous nation unto the Lord." May those who are slumbering in the fatal lethargy of sin "awake to righteousness and sin not:" alarmed by the judgments impending over them, may habitual sinners seek for grace, "to turn from the evil of their ways," before "the Lord be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on the wicked, and those who know not God." May the lukewarm, who, even in the hour of danger, still "halt between two opinions," cleave to the Lord, lest their souls should be required of them, whilst yet balancing the claims of God and mammon. May the faithful

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 12.

² Isaiah li. 11.

³ Ibid. lviii. 8.

trim their lamps, "have their loins girded, and their lights burning, and be like unto men that wait for their Lord : blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." And may God pour His especial grace and blessing upon the nation at large : that all may recognize His hand, submit to His will, depend on His protection, profit by His chastisements, and endeavour to promote His glory here and abroad, now and for ever. "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen ¹."

¹ Heb. xiii. 20.

A PRAYER

IN TIMES OF

PESTILENCE OR GREAT SICKNESS.

O ALMIGHTY and Everlasting God, whose gracious and never-failing Providence orders all things, both in heaven and earth ; we, Thy unworthy servants, most humbly beseech Thee, to look with an eye of pity upon thy afflicted people. We have sinned, O Lord, and done wickedly ; in the days of our prosperity we have forgotten Thee, the bounteous Giver of all good : but Thou dealest not with the sons of men after their sins, nor rewardest them according to their iniquities. Have mercy, therefore, upon us, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness : according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out our transgressions. We know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou, in faithfulness, hast afflicted us. But, O Lord, rebuke us not in Thy wrath, neither chasten us in Thy hot displeasure. Let mercy rejoice against judgment. And turn Thee unto us, and have mercy upon us : for we are desolate and afflicted. The troubles of our heart are enlarged : oh bring Thou us out of our distresses. Look upon our affliction and our pain, and forgive all our sins.

O Heavenly Father, our only dependence is upon Thy compassion. Thou art merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. For Thou knowest our

frame; Thou rememberest that we are dust. We come before Thee, therefore, trusting in the multitude of Thy mercies, and encouraged by the abundance of Thy great and precious promises. Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and hear the supplications of Thy people. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine anger towards us to cease. Of Thy only gift it cometh that Thy people can do unto Thee true and acceptable service. Pour, therefore, we humbly beseech Thee, upon this land, the spirit of grace and supplication, the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the Lord, that it may know, in this its day, the things which belong unto its peace; and may flee to Thee for deliverance from the floods of immorality, profaneness, and infidelity, which threaten to overflow its borders. O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, shed abroad, in the minds and hearts of this people, the enlightening, renewing, and sanctifying influence of Thy grace, that, recognising Thy judgments, submitting to Thy will, and profiting by Thy chastisements, we may humble ourselves under Thy mighty hand; and putting away from us the evil of our ways, may turn unto Thee with all our heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And then, O merciful and long-suffering Lord, who willest not the death of a sinner, but rather that all should repent and live; spare us, good Lord, oh spare Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood; and hear from Heaven, we implore Thee, and forgive our sin, and heal our land.

Furthermore, we earnestly address Thee, O gracious God, whose kingdom ruleth over all, in behalf of the whole race of mankind. Be pleased, of Thy great goodness, to grant, that now, when Thy judgments are in the earth, the in-

habitants of the world may learn righteousness : and in every land they may receive grace to glorify Thee in the day of visitation. Oh bless and prosper, we pray Thee, the means employed for the spread of the light of Thy Holy Gospel, here and abroad,—for the promotion of Thy glory, and the extension of Thy kingdom. That, in Thy good time, the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ.

Finally, we beseech Thee, of Thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succour all them, who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity;—more especially those who are set in the midst of so many and great dangers, by reason of the pestilence which it hath pleased Thee to send upon the land. Oh be Thou unto all Thy servants a refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Be merciful unto us, O God, be merciful unto us, for our souls trust in Thee ; yea in the shadow of thy wings will we make our refuge, until these calamities be overpast. Thou art our hope and our stronghold, our God, in Thee will we trust. O Lord, who art rich in mercy and goodness, suffer not, we entreat Thee, any evil to happen to us, neither any plague to come nigh our dwelling. And graciously produce in us such firm trust in thy mighty aid, amid all the trials and dangers of this mortal life, and such a blessed assurance, that, under Thy divine control, all things shall work together for our eternal good, that we may not be afraid for the terror by night, nor the arrow that flieth by day ; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. But that filled with joy and peace in believing, we may rest with humble and firm dependence, Heavenly Father, upon Thy sure protection, Thy blessed guidance, and Thy tender mercies, now and

the people whose trust is in Him." Then, God grant that it may be said of this land, long favoured and blest of heaven, thou "hast glorified God in the day of visitation¹;" therefore, thou shalt "obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away²." "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee, the glory of the Lord shall be thy re-reward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, *HERE I AM*³."

May God, whose gracious and never-failing Providence orders all things both in heaven and earth, of His infinite mercy, accomplish this great end of all His visitations, that we may become a "righteous nation unto the Lord." May those who are slumbering in the fatal lethargy of sin "awake to righteousness and sin not:" alarmed by the judgments impending over them, may habitual sinners seek for grace, "to turn from the evil of their ways," before "the Lord be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on the wicked, and those who know not God." May the lukewarm, who, even in the hour of danger, still "halt between two opinions," cleave to the Lord, lest their souls should be required of them, whilst yet balancing the claims of God and mammon. May the faithful

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 12.

² Isaiah li. 11.

³ Ibid. lviii. 8.

trim their lamps, "have their loins girded, and their lights burning, and be like unto men that wait for their Lord : blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." And may God pour His especial grace and blessing upon the nation at large : that all may recognize His hand, submit to His will, depend on His protection, profit by His chastisements, and endeavour to promote His glory here and abroad, now and for ever. "Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen ¹."

¹ Heb. xiii. 20.

away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us, and cleanse us by Thy precious blood, from the defilement of our past offences : Oh ! enable us to come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. O Almighty and merciful God, who art faithful, and who wilt not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able ; but wilt with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it : we cast all our care on Thee, who carest for us : And oh ! mayest Thou, Heavenly Father, who hast, of Thy free and unmerited mercy, begun a good work in us, perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Of Thy tender mercy, we beseech Thee, shed abroad in our hearts the consolations of Thy Gospel, and enrich us with Christian graces, that we may be supported under whatever afflictions Thou mayest be pleased to send, and receive them, and seek for grace to benefit by them, as being sent, gracious Lord, by Thee, in mercy and for our profit. That, under Thy most mighty protection and blessing, we may fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, and finish our course with joy ; by Him and through Him, to whom has been given a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth : and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen, Amen.

THE END.

